DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 105 UD 023 011

AUTHOR Bancroft, George W., Ed.
TITLE The Novice and the Newcomer. Student Teachers' Perspectives on Multiculturalism and Education.
SPONS AGENCY Department of the Secretary of State, Ottawa (Ontario).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-919581-05-6
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 84p.
AVAILABLE FROM Third Eye Publications, P.O. Box 4640, Station "C," London, Ontario, Canada N5W 5L7 (write for price).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Ethnicity; Higher Education; *Multicultural Education; *Racial Relations; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This is a collection of essays written by students enrolled in a 1978-79 course in cross-cultural education, given by the editor at the University of Toronto. The introductory essay, by Bancroft, provides general information on what teaching intercultural relations entails. The remainder of the papers include: (1) "From Taiwan to Canada: A Schoolgirl's Odyssey," by Rebecca Li; (2) "Commitment and Resolution," by Mike Cherneski; (3) "Teaching in a Multicultural Setting: A Guide-to-Myself," by Michael House; (4) "Of Culture, Language and Reality," by Doreen Kaminker; (5) "Multiculturalism: An Experience with Reality," by Helen Prince; (6)"The West Indian Immigrant in the Canadian School," by Deborah Kiladze; (7) "Ethnic Differences and the Breakdown of Communication," by Laureen Gunning; (8) "To Overlea, and Other Schools Like It," by Maria Wagner Price; (9) "On Being an Immigrant Student in Canada and Abroad," by Lesley Ann Pearson; (10) "A Liberalized Child, I Was Stymied," by Bill Newhook; and (11) "Students-in-Transition: A Self-Help Project," by Cecil Cummins. (AOS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED234105

THE NOVICE AND THE NEWCOMER
Student Teachers' Perspectives on Multiculturalism and Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Edited by
George W. Bancroft

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
NAVTEJ BHARATI
THIRD EYE PUBLICATIONS
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD 023 011

Third Eye
London Canada
1982

The Novice and the Newcomer
©1982 George W. Bancroft

CANADIAN CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Main entry under title:
The Novice and the newcomer

ISBN 0-919581-05-6

1. Intercultural education - Canada - Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Multiculturalism - Canada - Addresses, essays, lectures. 3. Children of immigrants - Education - Canada - Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Bancroft, George W.

LC3734.N68 371'.97'00971 C82-094574-9

Third Eye would like to thank the Multiculturalism Programme of the Secretary of State Department for its financial support to this publication.

Published by
Third Eye Publications Inc.
Box 4640, Stn. C, London, Ontario
N5W 5L7
Canada

Preface

Every year students write hundreds of papers to complete their courses. Sometimes they have their papers returned; more frequently than not, however, they leave them in their professors' offices whence, after a few years, they are consigned to the waste paper basket. But some of these papers are very good - fresh in the idealism and ideas that their writers manifest and, despite their weaknesses, deserving of a wider audience.

During the academic year 1978-79, one of the themes which I explored in the course on Cross-cultural Education offered by the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, was that of ethnicity. It was the first time that I had dealt with that theme. Several students chose to do their major assignment on some aspect of ethnicity - immigrants, race, race relations, etc. I felt that a few of the papers submitted were worth publishing because they dealt, in part, with personal experiences that the novice teachers had as they attempted to come to grips with the issue - for instance, there was the "white" Canadian student sharing her views on what it was like to be a minority student in a privileged school in Kenya, an experience that has led her to sympathize with the immigrant student going through our schools; there was the young woman, employed to survey a multicultural immigrant community in order to discover its educational needs, who came out of the experience with a sense of frustration and cynicism.

In some of these papers the authors make recommendations; in others they are at a loss to know what to recommend; but in all of them they share their thoughts - thoughts that, because the writers are novices in their profession, have not yet acquired the hard shine of sociological jargon and platitude.

In addition to reflecting the personal and/or the anecdotal, these papers exemplify the thrust of participant observation - a respectable sociological method. There is merit in such approaches particularly in issues having to do with interethnic, interracial and intercultural experiences; for while the empirical method with its objective statistical analyses is of great importance, there is a great deal that must be said for methods that seek to explore what participants in human situations see those situations as meaning to them.

It is hoped that in sharing the experiences which these novice teachers report, the reader, whether experienced teacher, social worker or interested lay person, will gain some furthur insight into the fascinating and complex challenge of working across ethnocultural boundaries.

In editing the papers I have, with the authors' permission, changed the names of people and places to avoid embarrassment; however where an organization or institution such as the Overlea Secondary School (pp.65-67) has come in for some special praise, the name has been retained.

My sincere thanks must be expressed to the many students in my classes who, in their frank and soul searching deliberations, helped me in my own thinking - for since this was the first time I had contended with the theme of ethnocity in my teaching, I too was a novice.

It is because of my indebtedness to them that I decided to contribute my own experience, and have done so in the paper, *"On Teaching Teachers and Multiculturalism."* Both the paper and the entire book are dedicated to them.

Special and sincere thanks must also be expressed to the following: Gil Scott and Judy Young of the Multicultural Directorate of the Secretary of State in Ottawa and Navtej Bharati, my publisher, "who loves books - and wants to do this one".

George W. Bancroft
Toronto

Table of Contents

On Teaching Teachers and Multiculturalism
George W. Bancroft 7

From Taiwan to Canada - a Schoolgirl's Odyssey
Rebecca Li 23

Commitment and Resolution
Mike Cherneski 30

Teaching in a Multicultural Setting - a guide - to myself
Michael House 35

Of Culture, Language and Reality
Doreen Kaminker 43

Multiculturalism - An Experience with Reality
Helen Prince 47

The West Indian Immigrant in the Canadian School
Deborah Kiladze 53

Ethnic Differences and the Breakdown of Communication
Laureen Gunning 59

To Overlea - and other schools like it
Maria Wagner Price 65

On Being an Immigrant Student - In Canada and Abroad
Lesley Ann Pearson 68

A Liberalized Child, I was Stymied
Bill Newhook 72

Students-in-Transition - a self-help project
Cecil Cummins 76

On Teaching Teachers and Multiculturalism

George W. Bancroft

Setting the Scene

It was Bernard Shaw who said, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." This bit of Shavian wit can be extended – "Those who can't teach, teach teachers to teach."

I am a teacher of teachers. I am an "ethnic". For five years now, I have been teaching teachers about multiculturalism focussing on the theme of poverty, one among three themes that form the basis of a course – Cross-cultural education – that two colleagues and I have formed a team to present. The other themes are ethnicity and sex roles. According to the Shavian dictum had we been able to "do" multiculturalism presumably to live or act (ago, agere egi, actum – to act, Latin) it, we would have done or acted so. Failing the ability so to do, we should have taught it – that is, about it and how to live it; but lacking even this second level of ability, we teach teachers about it so that they would go out to guide their students along multicultural paths which they, the youngsters, must eventually travel.

Of course one can turn Shaw and his extended dictum around and argue that it is precisely because of the critical need for people to be able not only to live but to survive in this

complex multiethnic, multiracial, multicultural world, that faculties of education must accept not only the challenge, but the duty, of producing teachers who, by their expertise and their sensitivity, can assist in socializing young Canadians into the pluralistic world of which, whether they recognize it or not, they form a part.

I was asked to add the theme of ethnicity to my deliberations. Despite the difference between ethnicity and race, what is usually asked of people dealing with ethnic concerns is that they consider race and race relations; students expect to hear a great deal about race relations and education when they register for a course dealing with ethnicity and education.

But I must express very clearly a few biases or points of view which I strongly hold; namely, a) I do not believe one can teach very much race relations – by this I mean formally teach race relations. One can teach race relations if, by that, one means imparting information on how Group A – the British, for example, interacted with Group B – the Indians, for example, in India during the days of the former's "glorious" empire. But this is quite different from teaching the Caucasian lad, if it can be taught, how to act with respect to the Hindu and vice versa. Probably it is because I was "taught" about various racial groups around the family dining table by parents and relatives of average education, who found time to converse with us, and also because I grew up in a multi-racial society, going to school and playing in the neighbourhood with boys and girls of different racial backgrounds, that I feel whatever positive racial attitudes are to be developed in children are to be developed in the home in a sort of osmosis fashion. Formal teaching can accomplish little.

There is another concern: "Liberals" in racial views are among the most difficult people to teach anything. Of course the liberal is more pleasant a person to deal with than the bigot – that goes without saying; but because the liberal does not know that he/she can be carrying the virus of racism within him/her, the task of teaching becomes all the more difficult. Leaving aside the bigots for the moment, a majority of people are liberals who are racially infested without realizing it. Perhaps most of us are. If the teaching of race relations implies or entails the diagnosis and treatment of negative racial attitudes in the individual and the fostering of the right positive ones, then leading seminars in multi-racialism and education with a group of one's students is no easy task – since many of those who are not bigots are liberals. Mr. Doolittle – to stay with Shaw for a moment – asks heaven to protect him from middle-class morality; one is tempted to plead a similar protection from middle-class liberal prospective teachers.

The First Awareness

The clue to developing in prospective teachers, though obviously not in them alone, the right attitude to racial groups other than their own is to "jerk" them or help them jerk themselves out of their accustomed ways – their taken for granted ways – of seeing things. There are several ways in which this may be done, one of them being to get the individual to think back to his first awareness of a situation with racially prejudiced overtones.

It is difficult to know when a child first becomes aware of ethnocultural and racial differences; but one does so at an early age. It was at an extremely early age that we knew that some of our playmates were Hindus and others Moslem – the latter came to school late on Friday afternoons because of having to go to the mosque; and we envied them. But it is not this kind of difference I have in mind. I mean, instead, the difference that is a problem or a difficulty, that is permeated with some negative force. I recall my first awareness of ethnocultural differences as a problem.

I was about thirteen years of age at the time and had been reading a book borrowed from our college library. The hero was about thirteen too. His grandfather had entertained a

guest with whom, on his leaving, the grandfather had shaken hands. After the guest had left, the grandfather turned to the youngster and said, "Did you notice that I shook hands with Mr. So-and-So?" "Yes," said the boy. The grandfather continued, "I did so although Mr. X is a Jew." He then went on to discuss something else because the story had nothing to do with interracial and interreligious relations; so the drawing of the grandson's attention to the hand shake was done almost incidentally.

But surely everyone shook hands when greeting someone or saying goodbye – at least in Guyana they did! So why would one talk about a hand shake? Then, I thought, probably there was a printing error hence the incomprehensibility of the grandfather's comment. Since there was no one around at the time to ask what it all meant, and since schoolboys reading gripping stories do not have time to bother about minor things such as a rather irrelevant comment on a hand shake, I never sought an explanation from any of the grown ups. It was not until years later when I not only had come to know what a Jew was, but that there was a thing called anti-semitism, that that seemingly meaningless passage read almost two decades earlier revealed its true meaning.

Probably the first exercises in classes dealing with race relations should be to have people attempt to recall their first experience of the negativity of racial and/or religious differences.

How to Teach About Race Relations

The problem with much of our teaching on race relations is that it is not experiential enough. One can intellectualize as much as one wants about it – and intellectual analysis is important – but such education has to be supplemented by real, visceral experiences. It is very difficult for the "white" student to have such experiences since he/she belongs to the dominant group that initially defines the situation. The discriminated against do not define the situation in the first place but react to the definition made by the dominant group. Ideally one should attempt, as one of the first strategies, to get the white student to look to the issue of his/her colour. "Colour" remains one of the central issues in race relations and, as such, its psychology is quite misunderstood. The white student approaches the non-white across this first landmark of colour and feels that it is the colour of the other that should be adjusted to. But the first reaction should be to the colour of one's self as others see it. Whites should place themselves in a position to hear what non-whites think about their white colour. And if they did – and if they listened – they would learn a number of mind-opening things, the first of which is that many non-whites do not regard white as necessarily being beautiful.

A more familiar situation arises when a white child asks about the colour of that chocolate man or woman. Many parents have too ready and self-righteous an explanation for this. And if they listened to reports of how others view their colour or react to their smell or body language, they would be in a better position to understand the complexity of skin colour and, by extension, other physical characteristics. But how does one talk about these things in a serious and unselfconscious fashion?

Some of the Things We Did

Many classes or seminars dealing with multicultural or multiracial issues tend to be too big to permit the in-depth discussion that should characterize these seminars; yet, paradoxically, there is merit in discussing the issues in a large group since the intensity of feeling that such discussion engenders is diffused; thus, in a way, it becomes somewhat easier to handle the complex concepts and attitudes with which the group is dealing. In a small group minds rub against minds or personalities against personalities more intensely and feelings,

surfacing more readily, can get out of hand. The size of a large class precludes people talking up a great deal and getting at each other's throats. Of course there is nothing wrong with getting at each other's throats provided the group leader has the psychological expertise – or there is someone in the group with it – to cope with such situations.

Frequently several students who had been touched in some way by something said in class preferred to come after to talk about it in a personal fashion; for instance, there was the Italian young man who was very vocal in class yet waited to see me after to discuss the question of why should he attempt to identify with his Italian culture as some of his other friends had done when he did not feel like so doing. Furthermore, he asked, why should he feel or be made to feel guilty for not wanting to do so? Interestingly enough, he did not look Italian at all, he seemed more Teutonic – an observation which in itself was rather thought provoking.

One of the best ways to begin to learn about intercultural, interracial or interethnocultural relations is by studying one's own culture objectively, critically and analytically. One way of doing so is to put oneself in another's cultural setting then look back, as it were, critically at one's own.

Two examples of what is meant follow. They were presented in class and discussed; and students were encouraged to expose themselves to similar or comparable situations then study their reactions and thoughts.

(a) *A Visit to a Synagogue*

When I taught in the Forest Hill system (now part of the City of Toronto), I was frequently invited to some of the ceremonies and services that were observed at the Holy Blossom Temple or the Beth Tzedec Synagogue. The former followed a reformed, the latter a conservative, religious philosophy.

I remember the first time I attended the Saturday morning service at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue to which I had been invited by one of my students. Going to church on a Saturday did not strike me as unusual – which it could have – because the community in which the synagogue is built is a very quiet residential area. Its inhabitants are Jews for the greater part so that on a Saturday the whole area exudes the quiet Sabbath air. Add to this the fact that Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, sees a great deal of activity outside, and it is not surprising to find oneself giving oneself up fully to a period of worship on a Saturday and feeling as if it were a Sunday – the spirit of the Sabbath transcends the feel of the day.

I was handed a Yarmulke on my arrival. The wearing of the Yarmulke was an interesting first experience for me not only at the level of doing in Rome as the Romans do, but because the wearing "violated" a basic practice of the Christian Church; namely, that men do not cover their heads in Church, or any other building for that matter. But practices such as the wearing of the Yarmulke, listening to the prayers and scripture reading in Hebrew effectively served their purpose of "lifting" one out of one's Presbyterian way of worshipping and temporarily socializing one into a Jewish way of doing so. This temporary socialization was in order since, by accepting the invitation to worship, I had voluntarily agreed to suspend my Christian practice although, it must be noted here, I fully expected to experience a sense of the religious, the worshipful, and the reverent.

As the service progressed, I surrendered myself fully into my role of the "outsider" sharing a moment of worship with the "other". It was a rewarding feeling; then the Rabbi read from the Psalms, and here came my first cultural shock: the goodly Rabbi was reading from my Psalms! I was the Christian; they were the Jews; how could they be reading our Christian Psalms? Then, a small internal voice said: Wait a minute. Those Psalms are not

yours. They are theirs. It is the Christians who "took them from the Hebrew King David."

The report of the incident here does not do justice to the power of the sobering thought that struck me. It was a mind-opening discovery and it became all the more confirmed when the time came for the benediction. The formula followed very closely those that are used in the Christian worship – thanks to God (Jehovah) for bringing us together to worship, a prayer for the sharing of our faith and for help "to go out into the world of next week and live the life of good . . . Jews." I had been prepared for "the life of good Christians." But of course I was being silly. Good Jews affirming their faith should ask that in the weekday world they live the lives of good Jews!

It is experiences such as these that one should expose oneself to, because the exposure confronts one with a serious examination of the question of what parts of one's culture is precisely one's own, what parts borrowed. It becomes very sobering to discover that those elements that are so central to one's culture have only been borrowed from another – frequently another that the borrower considers inferior, bearing in mind the cases cited here and the extensive degree of anti-semitism that history has witnessed.

(b) *Symbols and their meaning*

This second example will help make the point. For a number of years, I have been teaching summer school at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec. The small graduate student body usually consisted of about 40 to 60 highly experienced teachers, administrators and others. One year there was in the class an ex-army officer in his forties, who had spent some time on an international vocational/technical education project at one of the teacher training institutes in Nigeria.

One day he mentioned that, in the Nigerian township in which he had served, there used to be a man who went around with an empty camera case slung over his shoulder as a symbol of status and prestige. He told this with evident delight as illustrative of the idiocy of the villagers – who of any intelligence would go around with an empty camera case as a sign of status! At least a camera could be put to some use taking pictures and out of this photographing one could, like Youssuf Karsh, achieve status and prestige as a photographer. But an empty camera case was surely the essence of folly!

Suppressing my irritation at the student's attitude, I asked the class to list a number of symbols of prestige and status which we have in our culture – the mayor's chain of office, the several paintings on one's wall or pieces of sculpture in one's living room. As the list was extended, my point began to surface; namely, that *in our culture we have thousands of empty camera cases too as our symbols of prestige; and if the behaviour of that Nigerian villager was idiotic, it was no more so than ours* – indeed, ours may be still more idiotic given our much prized and higher levels of education.

I was attempting to make several points: (a) that social status and prestige can be measured by occupation or function – the camera and its being put to use; (b) social status is also indicated by symbols divorced from intrinsic function – the "empty" camera case; and (c) our symbols are no superior or inferior to those used in other cultures. We seem to respect the Gold Stick that the late Earl Mountbatten bore as Protector of the Queen's majesty, but tend to ridicule the fly whisk that the late Jomo Kenyatta carried as President of Kenya.

These then are the sort of activities we need to pursue in order to jerk ourselves out of our culture and, from a position outside, look back at our own and study it. The more we do so successfully, the more sensitive we become to other cultures.

Sometimes it becomes very difficult to get out of our culture physically; a next best way of accomplishing the same goal is by having people from another culture tell us how they see **our** culture. For this to be a successful exercise, we must be prepared to **listen** to what they are saying without getting on the defensive. "Canadians," wrote a Tibetan, "do not pray before a meal; they say a thing called 'Grace'; and after a meal they do not wash their mouths!" A Jamaican practical nurse once indicated how upset she was at what she considered the coldness of a Canadian funeral. "Surely," she argued, "if these people meant more to each other they would show more emotion at their funerals!" She was disconcerted at how few people took time out to attend a person's funeral service.

Testing Oneself

If much insight can be gained by standing outside of one's culture and looking back at it, a similar goal may be achieved by simply exposing oneself to another culture testing oneself and temporarily surrendering oneself to it. In so doing, one notes one's reactions, feelings, uncertainties and the eventual development of some confidence and a sense of being at ease in another culture. One does not have to go abroad to give oneself this experience. There are many opportunities to acquire it here.

Consider, for example, the East Indian subculture and their neighbourhood activities in Toronto. One such vibrant neighbourhood extends west along Gerrard Street at the Main-Gerrard intersection in southeastern Toronto. In the past, one parked one's car without a second thought to go shopping. Now that it has become an "ethnic" area, one feels as if one is "going *into*" the neighbourhood; and this feeling raises questions of protocol and rights of entry. But the feeling becomes more intense as one attempts to enter one of the record stores that sell Indian records. There are very few if any signs in English; Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and other scripts predominate. All of the persons are Asians; they pay no attention to the "entrant", who feels increasingly an "intruder". One's overwhelming feeling is to flee, but one tells oneself that one has every right to stay. And one stays. Gradually one's vision focusses and one begins to make a selection. Familiar names appear – Tagore, Ravi Shankar – but one is uncomfortable. One is a stranger. Then one smiles tentatively and poses a question: "How much does this cost?" and the cashier answers courteously. Only then, with the hearing of one's voice and an answering smile, does one begin to feel one can and should stay. The same experiences are had when one visits the local cinema that shows Indian movies.

What does it all mean? It means that the non-Asian is attempting to define the situation, to define his/her identity and sustain it; and a struggle ensues because it is felt that this identity is threatened by the Asian and being disconfirmed. The non-Asian wants to participate or involve himself; he has every right to do so because the freedom to purchase where or what he wants is an important freedom; and yet he feels, often mistakenly, that the seller does not want to sell his product – probably for fear that it will not be treated with the same degree of respect and appreciation as by those of whose culture it forms a significant part. It is this that happens in schools when the foreign minority student attempts to fashion for himself/herself a place in the new system.

The following activity was set by the class as an assignment: Select a neighbourhood in Toronto whose ethnocultural background is different from your own and explore it thoroughly. Write a report on your exploration. Since it was the first time such an assignment was being tried, students were given carte blanche as to what to observe and report on – the important thing was that the survey not be superficial and that students attempt to "experience" the neighbourhood in a "personal" fashion.

Some 90 reports were submitted – from the Pakistani-Canadian who had explored Chinatown, the Anglo-Saxon Canadian who had walked through "Little Italy", the Chinese-Canadian who had observed a Hungarian neighbourhood, or the Italian-Canadian who had "surrendered" herself to a Greek neighbourhood. The combinations were many, the reports very thought provoking, the accompanying maps facinating.

Several things struck me by the end of my study of the reports:

- the number of students who said that although they had passed through a neighbourhood before they had never really "seen" it;
- the number who had decided to go with a brother or a friend, that is to say not alone, not out of fear but because of a feeling of insecurity,
- the sense of feeling themselves an outsider or an intruder violating the privacy of a community;
- the wide range of rich detail that was observed and their meaning, such as the fact that to the Chinese red is the colour of happiness, that several groups – Portuguese, Italian, Jewish – had religious symbols on their doors;
- the feeling of being a stranger in their own country, (No one reported this with a sense of animosity.)
- the sensing of a discrepancy, actual or potential, between their subjective interpretation of the community and the objective one.

A majority of the students said, without being asked, that they had found the exercise one of their more meaningful ones!

Of Names and Naming

If colour is a significant indicator to be responded to in interracial, intercultural interaction, probably the one that is next in importance – at least within the school setting – is that of names. Shakespeare must have had more than just reputation in mind when he said that the person who stole his good name left him poor indeed.

Names are more than labels of identification. To name a child is to confirm his/her being. If this were not so, one would have little difficulty having the newly born child who dies buried without having been given a name. But this is inconceivable for most people. To be a child, that is, to be brought into existence, is to be named. A poignant comment on our American educational system was the musical "Nobody knows my name."

But in North America, particularly since the tremendous impact of the computer on our daily lives and with the increasing informality of living, names have lost their deep cultural and psychological meaning; the computer has led us to replace them with numbers; the informality has made last names, that is to say family names that give one one's geneological identity, give way to the innocuous and falsely democratic first name. One is expected to hear Elizabeth or Liz and know if the speaker means the British Queen or the American Senator's wife, or to mention Maggie and know immediately if it is the British Prime Minister or the Canadian celebrity that is meant. It is little wonder that the obvious consequence has developed, the "who" consequence: Jimmy who? Joe who? Elizabeth who? Maggie who?

In Canada, though obviously not here alone, modern technological man is fast becoming a faceless, nameless creature – the man without an identity. No wonder we are all looking alike – a wry comment on the racist statement "All Chinese or all Blacks look alike." All modern men are beginning to look alike, talk alike and think alike – all identity-less.

I devoted some time in class to the issue of names – not primarily because names are

fascinating and there is merit in communicating this fascination to students, but because it is only within the past two or three years that schools have been made to refrain from changing the "ethnic" names of their students. I have taught several Silverberg's at high school. One year my class at the university contained a Miss Silberberg. I asked her about this. It was an immigration officer's misspelling when her ancestors came over here – Silberberg they became; and Silberberg they have remained. Many people are familiar with cases such as the Italian girl named Nadia who was made to take the name Grace by her teacher or the Estonian Tiiu who was made to become Susan. (In this connection, see Ms. House's paper, p. 53 and Miss Price's, p. 97f). This happened to one of my students. Her name was Vincenza; the teacher made it Rose when she entered a Windsor school some eighteen years ago. She went through all levels of the system as Rose. Interestingly enough, she told me one day that her fiance to whom she had recently became engaged insisted on calling her Vincenza.

Another student whose name was Bogdhan, was made, as the Fench would say, to call himself Robert; and although he had gone right through to unversity as Robert and probably intended continuing as such, he said, rather thought-provokingly, that the Robert he is is different from the Bogdhan he is. Another, Rocco, said movingly "They made me change my name and *I still carry the scars*."

We are now having students from India and Pakistan where not only the names themselves, but the naming patterns are quite different. It behoves us as educators to adjust our system to their names, not the other way round. My presenting this conviction in class led to spirited disagreement on the part of some students. It was up to the immigrant to adjust to **our** system, they argued, not vice versa.

Is it? Let me illustrate. In our society names have no intrinsic meaning in the sense in which in India, for instance, they do. In her recently published book, *The Scope of Happiness*, Vijaya Pandit, the sister of the late prime minister Nehru, tells us that her niece, Indira Ghandhi, was given the middle name Priyadarshini meaning "pleasing to behold." She herself was named Sarup Kumari but, on being married, followed the Brahman custom of having her first names changed by her in-laws to Vijaya Lakshmi – "the conquering Goddess Laskshmi."[1] We of the west select names only because of their sound, their association with relatives or some such factor. Important though these may be, it is not quite the same as, for example, the biblical practice of choosing a name with a deeper or an intrinsic meaning.

However, regardless of how we choose our names, we grow to like them and they become us. As such, a person's name should be treated with extremely great respect whether it is Johns, Smith, Ramsbottom, Hoare, Redhead, Trudeau, or Diefenbaker.

The Swiss physician and psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, writes:

> The person is an indivisible whole . . . (that) is given straight off with all its still veiled richness . . . How shall we define it? Is there a single word that will adequately express it? . . . (T) here is – the name, which is not only the symbol of the person; it is the person itself.

And again:

> What separates and distinguishes me from other people is the fact that I am called by my name; but what unites me with them is the very fact that they call me. The movement of separation is what we understand by the formation of the self. Gradually the child must learn to recognize himself as distinct, first from his mother, then from other

> people, and finally from the world which he perceives as increasingly large and complex. But the very fact that he is addressed and has to respond constitutes a movement of union.

Then he quotes Professor Richard Siebeck of Heidelberg, "It is the calling (i.e. the naming and calling of the name) that creates the person."[2] My name is me; I am as I am named; and when the teacher in any way mutilates the name of the student, he/she violates the person or the being of that student – that student's identity. At this point one recalls the telling scene in Alex Haley's *Roots* when the African, Kunta Kinte, is forced by his master to take the name Toby; it breaks him.

An exercise: "My Name is Me" or "Nobody Knows my Name"

Teachers can try the following exercise:

1. Discuss your own name with the class – how you came to get it; what it means to you, etc. This reduces the selfconsciousness students may feel.
2. Hand each student a class list of names so that he/she sees his/her name as part of a totality (the I/we sense of the group).
3. Give a few simple rules of pronunciation for a few names – rules of which you are sure, e.g. with Italian names "-CI" is pronounced "chi" and "-ZZI" as "tzi".
4. Have as many children as (a) want to (b) time permits, stand and tell their names paying particular attention to pronunciation; or, depending on the age of the class, let them teach you their name individually, then you teach it to the class.
5. For fun, get each child to make up a new name for himself/herself applying some of the principles teased out in the preceding steps. e.g. "If you were asked to give yourself a new name what would it be?" Let those doing so explain their new name.
6. In this activity there should be NO pressuring; those who do not want actively to take part should be left alone – kindly.

The Questions

A successful course in race relations and education should raise more questions – disturbing questions – in the students' minds than provide easy recipes for solution, for there are few easy recipes. Since I have formulated several questions in this regard and presented them elsewhere,[3] I shall not repeat them here. Instead I present eight from among some seventy that my students posed. I had invited them to formulate questions which I would attempt to answer in as honest a fashion as possible. School teachers may want to do the same. The questions presented here are arbitrarily chosen from the students' list.

They asked:

1. For which conventions, if any, should we demand uniformity from all Canadians?
2. What are the expectations of immigrants coming to Toronto?
3. Why are some people in Canada ashamed of their cultural background? They, are born here but have parents who were born in the "old country," and the children will not admit the fact of the their background.
4. What does being a hyphenated Canadian mean to you?
5. Is it possible to create a Canadian united ethnic group?
6. How does one teach self-awareness in schools? Multiculturalism seems to widen the communication gaps by creating groups in a Canadian vacuum.

7. What are the roots of our fears, our distrusts? (I feel afraid and distrustful even in as simple an incident as simply confronting a large male group of a given ethnic group).
8. How long must an immigrant live in Canada before he/she ceases to be an immigrant and becomes rather an integral part of this society – or is this never to happen?

A Few Answers:

(a) Uniformity of Conventions

To answer this question one needs to recognize a separation between the public sphere of an individual's life and the private. The conventions that have an element of uniformity should be only in the public and not in the private sphere. Prime Minister Trudeau put the issue in an excellent and trenchant fashion when he said that the government had no business in the bedrooms of the nation. We can add, also, the now almost trite dictum that a man's home is his castle. Thus what and how an immigrant cooks or how and where he worships is not the business of the government and, by extension, the rest of society on whose behalf the government or the state functions.

With regard to the public sphere, however, another matter exists. It is within the public sphere that a predominant concern and responsibility are located, namely, the smooth functioning of society. Thus it is here that the demands for uniformity in conventions should be made and conflicting conventions reconciled. These conventions should be kept to a very minimum. To do so will call for a great deal of spiritual and psychological strength to resist the tremendous pressure to standardization that characterises modern life. In other words, the freedom to live by conventions that are not followed by the mass of society demands a tremendous price and the person who wants so to live must be prepared to pay that price.

Because in Canada we believe in the ease of social interaction, we have established laws to suit our circumstances. It is reasonable to demand, therefore, that all Canadians, immigrant or native, respect the laws of the land. The law may be an ass and may run counter to the laws the immigrant subscribed to in his country of origin; but, on coming here, he must recognise that he gives up his country's laws for those of Canada – and if it proves too difficult for him to do so, he should go to a country whose laws are more congenial to his way of thinking and living.

But there is another side to the coin. Laws tend to become rigidities when, in fact, if they are to be living or dynamic they should be capable of being changed in keeping with the new social realities that exist. Laws are sacred in the sense that they are to be treated with respect; but they should never be so sacrosanct that they cannot or should not be changed. The immigrant, as citizen, has his part to play, in association with the native, in bringing about changes in the law.

It is pointless to list here the several conventions that may demand uniformity; but one unhesitatingly proposed here is that of respect for the country, Canada, – not a narrow nationalism that pridefully fails to see that one's country is not always right but frequently wrong, or that would extol it for its virtues and fail to criticize it for its weaknesses, but one that reflects the sort of pride that many Africans have in Africa, Indians in India, and Chinese in China – for these are the lands that bore and fashioned them, and it is to the soil of their countries that many of them keep hoping to return to mingle with the dust.

Canadians desperately need to feel a pride in Canada. Mistakenly we seem to think we are better as citizens of the world, at one with universal man; so, we argue, let us not give a damn about Canada but seek to embrace the world. We forget that the world is too vast to be grasped at the outset. It is not until we get hold of ourselves that we can get hold of the

world; it is not until we are fairly secure in our identity as Canadians that we can move to the next stage and get hold of our links with universal man; it is not until we are citizens of a country that we can grow into citizens of the world.

A student proposed a novel way of solving the problem of uniformity of conventions. He suggested that we list all the conventions by which various Canadian groups live, then have the several immigrant groups do the same. Eventually, this massive list will be discussed thoroughly and those which seem un-Canadian or unpalatable to Canadians ("We Canadians just cannot accept that") eliminated until an agreed upon master list is compiled.

At one level the suggestion is naive because of its unwieldiness and the fact that discussion may be carried out in a vacuum; at another level, it is precisely what we do when a new practice comes to the fore and, by discussion that tests its validity and negotiation its acceptability, it is eventually incorporated in our patterns of behaviour. This is the process of democracy.

(b) *The Expectations of Immigrants*

The answer to this question is simple. Immigrants to Canada hold the same expectations that native Canadians hold – no more, no less; indeed, if anything, by virtue of their initially uprooted situation and the fundamentally challenging experience that marks giving up one country or society for another, it might be said that immigrants come to Canada expecting and intending to work very resolutely to succeed. They cannot afford to fail.

Sometimes, though, their expectations are unrealistically pitched. The challenge, then, is to aid them to adjust their expectations to levels in keeping with their capacities. If expectations are to be adjusted, they must be genuinely tailored to the capacities of the individual and not spuriously linked to discriminatory structures in the system.

Finally, it cannot be emphasized too much that the immigrants expect to have to work hard for what they want; they do not expect a free ride – hard workers, yes; easy riders, definitely not!

(c) *Shame In One's Cultural Background*

For children the apparent shame in their parents' cultural background stems primarily from the pressure they endure as they attempt to reconcile two cultures. They are young and at the stage where they are attempting to fashion an individual identity. Even if they and their parents came from the same culture, because of the difference in generation there is a self-consciousness of the difference between parental norms and the new norms emerging in the child's generation. Children tend to feel self-conscious of their parents' music – Bing Crosby, instead of the Rolling Stones or the most recent musical monstrosity, the way they dress – ties and flannels instead of hush puppies and sloppy jeans. My point here is that, as we study inter-ethnic culture, we need to distinguish between factors caused by intergenerational differences and those by the inter-ethnic or inter-cultural; also between self-consciousness due to awkwardness and shame caused by rejection.

But let us concede that what we are observing may be shame. Before condemning the child, we need to ask ourselves in what way do we contribute to that shame or absence of pride. In his *Invitation to Sociology*, Peter Berger writes: "(I)dentity is socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed . . . (It) is not something 'given,' but is bestowed in acts of social recognition."[4]

In many cases the shame a child feels in his parental subculture is engendered by the attitudes with which others outside the subculture react to it. The young Italian Canadian boy whose parents speak only very broken English may be ashamed of them if his non-

Italian Canadian teacher treats them, either actually or imaginedly, in a patronizing fashion; but when the young non-Italian teacher comes to realize that, were he in Italy, his Italian would be as "appalling" to the Italians, he becomes more sensitive to the problem of the student and – particularly if he is well educated and cultured – the parent. Since it is the non-Italian Canadian who, in this context, is conferring identity, then he is the one to be worked on first to bring about a change in his attitude.

A simple self-administered exercise can help to bring about this psychic change in attitude. All of us, understandably but mistakenly, think our mother tongue is the most honoured and oldest form of the spoken word, and consider those who cannot speak our language extremely unfortunate. But we should pay a visit to the language section of a major library such as the Toronto (Central) Public Library and walk through the languages and newspapers sections. To find in one place such a great number of the world's languages and to recognize how small is the portion of human thought that one is exposed to through English can be a most traumatic experience.

But what can be done to or for the person whose mother tongue or culture it is and who feels this shame? Such a person has to attempt to stand back and examine his parental subcultural expressions as objectively or analytically as possible. This is the only way a true appreciation of those cultural elements may be developed. The following illustrates.

In Guyana, where English is the mother tongue, educated Guyanese in the past learned standard Guyanese English in precisely the way their Canadian counterparts learn standard Canadian English. But dialects were also spoken, generally by the "working" classes. These dialects had very interesting variations depending on one's being of African descent ("We a-go = We are going") or of East Indian descent ("A-we a-go = We are going"), from the city or from the village, from one county, Demerara, or another, Essequibo. Because these were "poor" people's dialects or the speech of the uneducated, all sorts of steps were taken, and understandably so, in the middle class or professional home to prevent the children from speaking this way. It was considered an inferior kind of English.

One night recently I was listening to a radio program celebrating Robbie Burns Day. His writings in the Scottish dialect were being read. It suddenly dawned on me that his dialect was really no more "respectable" than the Guyanese. Why then should Guyanese people be ashamed of the latter while fully prepared to imitate and treat with respect the former and teach Burns's poems in their schools and exclude their own? Experiences such as these help a person to develop pride in his ancestral cultural expression.

Another experience is germane. It concerns the matter of dress. A child grows up being made to feel that the dress his parents wore "in the old country" is primitive if it's African, exotic if it's his Indian mother's saris, strange if it is his Sikh father's turban, quaint if from the Ukraine. The child needs to be helped to see the rich aesthetic and social values in the dress that his ancestors wore. This can be done in several ways. First of all, attempts should be made to help the children see that their ancestral dress was/is as functional to their society and climate as ours is to ours. In other words, they have to be helped to see that these garments are dress not costumes. Here is where the first error is made. The charming hostess graciously asks the parents to wear their national costumes! But costumes are for masquerade balls and theatricals; these garments are for dressing not for dressing up.

But more than this functionality of attire, one has to be helped to see the aesthetic of the garment and its cultural significance. A personal experience will illustrate. When I was growing up, we were taught that Africans dressed primitively; and, quite frankly, pictures of Africans struck me as being somewhat unattractive. A somewhat similar point of view or attitude was inculcated with respect to the dress of the East Indian women; for whereas in

the villages of Guyana the uneducated 'coolie' women stuck to their saris and urnis, one of the signs of their progress was their shedding of these garments and becoming 'Englishfied"– as it was termed.

But back to the African attire. One year, Trinity College of the University of Toronto was celebrating International Sunday in its chapel. When the service was over, I mingled with the crowd of worshippers leaving the chapel; suddenly I saw two Ghanian students standing framed within the gothic arches of one of the windows. They were wearing their Kente garments. The autumn morning sun was filtering through the window panes on to them as they stood there. They looked as I had always pictured the distinguished Roman senators to look as they deliberated in the corridors of the Forum. It was a brief moment in time, only a Sunday morning's vignette, but it was impressive. Wherein lay, I asked myself – and still do – the primitiveness of the African dress that as children we were so effectively taught?

Fortunately an encouraging development has occurred in Canada over the past decade and a half. Streets in the urban centres reflect a variety of national dress that immigrants have brought with them; we have incorporated many of these styles into our North American own whether they are the African dashiki or the Mexican poncho. Boutiques selling a wide variety of fabrics and artifacts are common; art galleries such as the Hamilton Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario sponsor magnificent shows on Contemporary Senegalese Art or the Treasures of Tutankhamen, and enterprising musical entrepreneurs assail our ears with the reggae of Bob Marley and arrest our eyes with the dances of les Ballets Africains. In other words, our children are being exposed to an increasing amount of the culture of other lands, so those in whose tradition these expressions do not belong can grow to appreciate them; and those who are inheritors of a given one can take pride in it.

There is, however, another point. There is a pressure to conform to the culture in which one finds oneself, and regardless of how attractive the sari may be to others, it is understandable that the young Asian girl may be attracted to jeans in their somewhat tight-fitting rear-end splendour. Such an attraction may upset the "old people;" but this change has to be recognised and accepted; as the children grow into manhood and womanhood and begin to see the standardized cultural imprint that characterises modern man, they will turn increasingly to the cultural expressions of their ancestors; not to adopt them to the rejection of our homogenized Canadian one, but to appreciate them afresh and add them to their own.

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to indicate what one approach to teaching for harmonious intercultural relations may entail. Because of the limitations of space, nothing has been said about designing curricula and developing multicultural learning materials – all of which are desperately needed.

As the academic year came to an end, a disconcerting feeling arose that probably too intellectual, too dispassionate, too "sophisticated" an approach had been taken in the course on the whole subject of ethno-cultural differences. Indeed, several of the students in criticising the course said precisely that; although they were generally complimentary in their comments. On the threshold of a new academic year the feeling returns. A backlash seems to have set in multiculturalism at home; and abroad the hostility among nations seems to have increased.

And yet, what can one do? Multiculturalism, says one student in the preamble to her question, seems to widen communication gaps by creating groups in a Canadian vacuum; another raises questions about the roots of our fears and distrusts.

The two questions are connected because our fears and distrusts stem in part from ignorance and from the lack of communication. To solve the problems, then, one needs to increase the knowledge various groups have of each other – not only the factual knowledge such as size of country, population, or political system, but a deeper interpretation and understanding of the culture; a knowledge that seeks answers to questions such as: As a male you are accustomed to wearing a "head cover" at worship; how does it feel to be without one? Naked, awkward, less reverential? You as a woman, how does it feel to meet and interact with a man in a situation that is not arranged by the family as in your culture?

And one needs to increase the chances for communication between groups, Multilingual television stations may help if they succeed in getting a viewer to stay with a program telecast in a language other than his own. More classes for adults in a wider variety of languages may help, not necessarily only for those who want to sustain their language, but for persons from other language groups who want to learn that language. I was rather bemused when one student originally from Poland told of her shock one day to turn on her television set at home in Poland to see a Black speaking Polish. Another commented that in her Italian class were two East Indian girls. But why this surprise when Blacks speak English or French or German, or become among Russia's outstanding literary artists? Why should we not take in our stride the Chinese person speaking French or Spanish, the East Indian speaking Portuguese or Latvian? These are the subtler barriers that have to be overcome.

Some students felt that the course was a waste of time or propaganda because, in their view, there really was no "problem" – every immigrant group coming to Canada has had it tough at the outset, they argued, but many have accepted the challenge and made good.

My own view is that a university class room is not the place to make a fundamental breakthrough in ethnic and racial attitudes. At best, it is only a place where a start may/can be made; in the final analysis, it is only in the crucible of daily living that the impurities of racism and racial prejudice, interethnic hostility and religious animosity can be purged away.

In his novel, *Too Late the Phalarope*, Alan Paton has one of his characters recall a powerful vignette. Although Canada is not South Africa, it is naive to argue that the germs of racism or negative inter-racial attitudes exist here "only in a small minority." It is sobering, then, to look at Paton:

> "We were talking of colour and race, and whether such feelings were born in us or made, and Moffie told us the story of the accident in Cape Town, how the car crashed into the telephone box, and how he had gone rushing to help, and just when he got there the door of the car opened and a woman fell backwards into his arms. It nearly knocked him over, but he was able to hold her, and let her gently to the ground. And all the time the light was going off and on in the telephone box. And just when the light went on, he saw it was a Malay woman that he had in his arms, full of jewels and rings. And he could not hold her any more; he let her go in horror, not even gently, he said, and even though the crowd was there. And with a word he pushed through the crowd and went on his way. For the touch of such a person was abhorrent to him, he said, and he did not think it was learned; he thought it was deep down in him, a part of his very nature. And many Afrikaners are the same."[5]

If such attitudes are inbred, how are they to be eradicated? If learned, what part can teachers really play in fostering a new learning? It seems to me that before teachers can go into the schools to deal with subcultural realities different from their own, they will have to expose themselves to their own frailities. More than their intellectual awakening, their emotions will have to be awakened too. It is difficult to predict in what situations such awaken-

ings will take place, whether in situations planned by professors or professional development personnel, or in unplanned situations when the unexpected confronts them as it confronted Moffie and leaves them bare.

I had one such experience and with the telling of it I end this paper. Some eighteen years ago, before multiculturalism had become the term that it is today, Alan Paton's book *Cry the Beloved Country* was one of the literary works taught in the Grade X English programme in the Forest Hill Collegiate Institute where I taught.

I had always felt that the use of this work was a typically liberal gesture on the part of the school authorities; that they really did not conceive of the fundamental multiracial change that would occur in our society. I decided to treat the novel as academically as possible and avoid the platitudinous philosophising about brotherhood that would most surely develop. In this I was reasonably successful. Then one hot sweaty day I decided to end the unit with one of the classes by reading the closing paragraphs of the novel. The section tells of when the Reverend Kumalo climbs the mountain to watch the dawn rise, the dawn that would see his son, Absalom, hanged for the murder of Mr. Jarvis. On the mountain top Reverend Kumalo recalls Msimangu's statement, "I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they (the Whites) have turned to loving they will find we (the Blacks) are turned to hatred."

With a rock as an alter, the Reverend Kumalo partakes symbolically of the Holy Communion using heavy maize cakes and tea as the elements. Then the dawn breaks and the Reverend Kumalo thinks the light will come one day to dispell the racial darkness of his country. "For it is the dawn that has come, as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing. But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret."[6]

I had read these passages many times before to several classes in the best declamatory style I could muster – with no spectacular effect on anyone. But on this particular occasion, the Reverend Kumalo's dim ray of hope in the bitter sadness of the situation and the inscrutable secret surrounding the dawn of his people's emancipation came through to me with telling impact. It was emotionally upsetting and I hurried out of the classroom to prevent the students from seeing their teacher's emotional upset in a moment of unguardedness.

Twenty years later one teaches teachers. Paton has been replaced by much more militant and acerbic writers. Race is commonly and openly, though awkwardly and self-consciously, discussed in the public arena today. True enough, some progress in racial harmony has been made in Canada; and yet, one wonders. One wonders how many of the young men and women who sit through courses and workshops on multiculturalism or multiracialism and education will go out into our schools and successfully contend with the new multicultural and multiracial reality that has emerged in our society. Perhaps their success will lie not primarily in how well they help the boy or girl from an immigrant culture to become part of the class, but the extent to which they discover more of themselves in the hesitant stumblings of the students that Fate has given them a chance to teach.

---

1. Pandit, Vijaya Lakshmi, *The Scope of Happiness*, New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1979. p. 58 and p. 74.
2. Tournier, Paul, *What's in a Name?*, London, SCM Press Ltd., 1975. p. 5.

3. See "Multiculturalism and Teacher Education" in Wolfgang, A., *The Education of Immigrant Students*, Issues and Answers, Toronto. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. pp. 166f. 1975.
4. Berger, *op. cit.*, pp. 98. ff.
5. Paton, Alan, *Too Late the Phalarope*. (Signet; 1956) p. 89.
6. Paton, Alan, *Cry the Beloved Country*. (Scribner's; 1948) p. 277.

From Taiwan to Canada - a Schoolgirl's Odyssey

Rebecca Li

"Man is human only when he is civilized as we commonly say, or when he is acculturated and enculturated, as the anthropologist says. He becomes civilized only through education, the disciplining in systematic relationships with others according to the rules, habits, and beliefs of society."

Ruth Landes, *Culture in American Education*
(New York: Wiley; 1965) p. 35

"Culture is continually pooled in tides that swirl over the earth as men migrate and communicate, passing on technologies (gunpower, printing press), ideas (monotheism, justice), values (individual liberty and salvation), and social systems (industrialization, political democracy) along with their genes. Humanity's stocks of accumulated learnings, or cultures, are forever being toyed with and altered."

ibid., p.4

"Ethnicity means peoplehood, a sense of commonlity or community derived from networks of family relations which have over a number of generations been the carriers of common experiences. Ethnicity, in short, means the culture perceptions, needs, mode of expression, behaviour and identity."

J. Herman (editor) *The Schools and Group Identity*
(U.S. American Jewish Committee, 1974) p. 17

When we have a cross-cultural situation, what happens to the culture of each individual person? Does the person go through different changes in life? Does he keep his mother tongue? Does he think or act differently from his ancestors? Does he lose his identity? In what degree does the new culture influence the person? Can he retain his original culture or does he lose it? Is he the product of a mixed culure?

In order to answer these questions, we may look at my past experiences living in three different countries where I was influenced by three types of cultures, social customs and obligations and three completely distinct languages.

This essay, besides being an account of my past as a child, an adolescent and a teenager, is a record of personal observation, opinion and criticism of the educational systems, the life style, the customs and the people of three countries – Taiwan, Brazil, and Canada. My intention is to present different vivid pictures where one sees an immigrant child go through painful and yet successful phases of her life as a student and a human being in a public school, a junior and senior high school and eventually university. In this picture, I will try to describe my feelings toward the schools, the teachers, the school mates and the friends I met, how I interacted with each of them and how they reflected on me.

First of all, let me introduce myself and tell you a little bit of my life and my identity.

I am Chinese, born on the small island of Taiwan or as we, Chinese, call it the Republic of China, in June of 1954. Both my parents are Chinese; and, as far as I know my ancestors were Chinese. Fortunately, and in some way unfortunately, I am the first born, and under me I have a sister, 2 years younger, and a brother, 3 years younger. According to my father, the Fu (my maiden name) family used to be a very rich, distinguished and united family. However, due to the war and the communist taking over, the family has since been dispersed. Both my parents had the privilege of getting a good education. They are and have been always semi-liberated in thinking, however, they kept, as much as they could, in our home the Chinese traditions. The reason is that my father had been influenced by the western world or the western style of life since a young age. He is fluent in both English and Chinese. Therefore I would consider him a rather western, modern and liberated type of Chinese. However, he has kept many of his ancestors' customs and dogmas. He believes in the filial piety, the preservation of the Chinese language, the family name and blood, the customary formalities, the paternal authority, and the importance of education.

Since my father was educated and had a good and high position in an American company stationed in Taiwan, he could afford to have a house and a family. Judging from the standards of that time in the country, I would say that we were considered to be an upper middle class family.

Both my parents are highly educated, therefore they know very well that, no matter what happened to them, they have to provide the best for their children – materially, educationally, and opportunity-wise. They are not the only Chinese parents to think and plan that way, for 99 out of 100 parents in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong would give their children the opportunity to gain the best education and learning above everything in life. You may say that "to give the best education" is the traditional custom or duty of Chinese parents. For this reason, my parents always tried to give us the best education by sending us to the best schools; and it was for this same reason that they took us to the western world hoping to provide a better future for us.

In 1963, my whole family left Taiwan and we settled in a new and unknown country, Brazil, where I spent six and a half years of my adolescence. In 1970, once again we left Brazil and came to Canada, also unknown to us, where I spent my years as a teenager and adult.

Allow me to trace back in memory my childhood and concentrate on my school days, and let me tell you how I spent my days in a typical Chinese school and what was offered to me in the field of education. Chinese people put a tremendous emphasis on the importance of education, and the government provides funds to build schools and train teachers to furnish the best, by their standards, to the young generation of the country. I do not deny that we had good schools; I can even say that I was enrolled in one of the best schools in Tai-pei; however, in retrospect, these schools did have their bad points.

The school in which I was enrolled was located in the centre of the city and it was a government-run public school. As far as I can remember, the school was quite spacious. It had one big auditorium, one playground for grades 1, 2, 3 and a main court where morning exercises and physical education classes were held. It had a music room, but no specific science rooms. The curriculum was composed of Chinese language (reading and writing), Chinese history, geography, mathematics, art, music, physical education, home economics, and industrial arts and sciences. An average class size was about one teacher to 55 students. Except for physical education, music, art, home economics, industrial arts and sciences, all other subjects were taught by the home form teacher. A school day lasted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

I do not know whether one can ever imagine a Chinese student studying! It has been said that to be a Chinese student it means a life of constant mental battle and hardship. Since the first day of my first grade up to the present time I have never stopped studying and trying my best to be a good student. To come home with a bad mark means to shame my name, my parents, my teachers. It is almost like an eternal crime. Therefore, as a student in my first three years of primary school I worked hard, for nothing was more important in my life than getting "A" in my subjects. The competition was high and it was difficult to be the top one.

Usually, in the morning we had Chinese language, mathematics, history, and geography, and in the afternoon other courses. In the Chinese school system, we had a distinct way of categorizing the students. They were rated according to the marks. The best student was ranked in the first place, the second best in the second place and so on to the 55th place of the class. At the end of a school year, according to the student's overall average, he or she was ranked. Afterwards the rankings were announced publicly. It was logical that if a student was ranked number one, he or she was very proud of himself or herself, and if a student was in 55th place, he or she had already shamed his/her ancestry.

My father, being a Chinese parent, was extremely strict with us. Once we were enrolled in the school, we were required to study very hard and get the best ranking in the class. Since I was the oldest in the family, my father's demands were a heavy burden on my shoulders.

Since Chinese people treat education as a serious issue in anyone's life, teachers were trained in a very strict, militant fashion. In other words, the teachers' duties were, above all, the most important role in the education system. They were to teach, to make sure that their pupils learned every detail of the lesson, and to set good examples in moral and spiritual conduct. If they saw that their pupils were being disobedient of their orders, bad in discipline, or slacking off in doing work, they were to punish them. When I say punish, I do not mean in a "Canadian mild" fashion. This punishment signified using a very thin rod or ruler and hitting on the hands or giving extra homework for the pupils to do. I remember being caned by a rod for not understanding the lesson and therefore for making mistakes in my homework.

As I said before, the class size was huge, and because of this, students were not given the chance to give personal opinions on the subjects or have the opportunity to have small

group discussions. It was always one teacher talking to a huge class.

When I finished my third year of primary school in Taiwan, my parents decided to emigrate to Brazil. The country was totally unknown to us. We did not know the language, which was Portuguese; we were strangers to their way of living, their customs and to their attitudes. Travelling from an Asian country and landing in a South American one was a sudden shock for us, both culturally and mentally.

I was nine years old when I arrived in Sao Paulo, an industrial city of Brazil. Like my brothers, I did not know one word of Portuguese, which was our strongest handicap. Soon after we had arrived, we were enrolled in a public school near our house. Three of us were put in the same class, like cold ducks, and were expected to follow quite normally the lessons. Naturally, it was utterly impossible for us to follow any class or to understand anybody. I should mention at this point that, since I did not know the language, I was put in the first grade which meant that I was three years behind the normal students. Even though in the beginning it seemed a lost battle for us, we still managed to survive and pass the years with high standards.

The first public school in which we were enrolled was considered a mediocre one. It was poor and had little to offer academically to the pupils. A normal school day lasted half a day and the only subjects we did learn were Portuguese (reading and writing), mathematics and social studies (Brazilian history and geography). According to the standard I had been accustomed to, the teachers were not very strict in maintaining discipline and, in my view, a few of them did not fulfil their duties as teachers, that is to say, they did not make sure that their pupils learned the lessons; and instead of teaching, they would waste time chit-chatting with another colleague. Besides spending less time in the school, the pupils wasted half an hour having their breaks.

After we had studied for two years in this public school, my father, very disappointed, transferred us to another one which he and most the the people considered a better schol. It was a pupil-oriented, serious, private school, and an experimental type of school. Its principal was a dedicated educator and had followed the American educational system and implemented it in a Brazilian setting. The school was located in the city and the building was quite modern. The school had a music room, an art room, a home economics room, and beautiful library.

As far as I can recall, I spent two of my best primary school years in this school – my third and fourth years of schooling in Brazil. This school started its day at 9 a.m. and finished at 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. We had for our curriculum Portuguese (reading, writing, and composition), calligraphy, Brazilian history, geography, mathematics, music, art, physical education, home economics and industrial arts and library (exchange books). During these two years, I really did learn all that was given to me. Our teachers were hard-working staff members; they truly dedicated themselves to the pedagogy.

The class size was an average of 33 students per teacher. Although the class size was relatively reasonable, we did not have much chance to share and give opinions. Lessons were always lectures given by the teacher.

When I finished my primary education – after only four years – I went to junior high school. The junior high school in which we were enrolled was a very disappointing one. It was run by the government and the school was very poor. We continued to study all the subjects from primary school except that home economics, sciences and French were additional subjects. We did not have special classrooms for art, music, science or physical education, therefore pupils had to bring from home equipment and apparatus for science and art.

In this school the teachers were satisfactory and, as far as I could notice, they performed their duties conscientiously. The methods of teaching were always the same – the teacher giving lectures and putting his/her notes on the board. Everyone copied notes in their notebook. The only way to learn and get a good mark was to memorize the notes and you were sure to get a perfect mark. I was considered an excellent student, for I never wasted my time in school and took schooling very seriously.

• • •

In 1970, we came to Canada. Once again we had to go through all the hardships and struggles of being an immigrant. Again, we were faced with a new language, a new environment and new culture. But, since we had survived in Brazil, we were sure we would succeed in Canada. Naturally, but for us surprisingly, we found out that in any Canadian public school or high school students were treated as V.I.P.'s. To us the schools were like heavens and wonderlands, for the students had everything they wanted for learning – science equipment, swimming pools, field trips, language labs, libraries, resource centres . . .

From 1970 to 1974, I pursued my senior high school education in the Georges Vanier Secondary School in Willowdale. Compared with the educational system of the other two countries, the Canadian one definitely has more advantages. However, I would refrain from judging which one is the best or the right one to educate the students; nor would I describe Georges Vanier since we all know how a Canadian school functions. Therefore, let me at this point give my opinions concerning the three educational systems and draw some kind of comparison and a personal evaluation.

As one may have observed, I went through three phases of my student life. The first one, I would consider a phase of strict, almost military training, where I was given a very bookish learning. I was brought up in a very competitive environment where "study" was the only thing a child should care for. In my opinion, the Chinese education system is good, since the schools have good and qualified, responsible teaching staffs. However, due to the mass population in such a small island, teachers are forced to have huge classes and their methods of teaching may not be as good as they could be. I do believe that to maintain discipline, some sort of punishment should be enforced, nevertheless, I do not believe that the method of caning is appropriate and correct because, in some way, it dehumanizes both the student and the teacher.

The Brazilian educational system is poor compared with either the Chinese or the Canadian one. First, the government does not put out enough money to build a good and suitable school for their children, and the discipline is considered too soft. The methods of teaching in Taiwan and Brazil are very similar; in both places teachers stand in front of the classroom giving lessons; students just copy down the notes. There is hardly any discussion, talks or presentations on the part of the pupils. The learning process followed by the pupils is the method of memorizing, which, in my opinion, is not an adequate way for learning some subjects. Using different methods such as small group discussions, field trips, plays or even games in various subjects can absorb the interests of the students easily and efficiently. In order to allow these methods to be used, teachers need all sorts of equipment and facilities – space, assistants and, above all, **money**.

The Canadian government and the different boards of education can afford the money and the personnel to give the students the best; and Canadian children are extremely lucky to have such well-equipped schools. I should add that it is a shame that they do not know how to appreciate what they have got and be thankful.

I was particularly overwhelmed to find out about a school owned by the Toronto Board of Education for biology and geography students and called The Boyne River Natural Science School. In this particular school, students from either public or secondary schools can spend two weeks studying biology or geography from a realistic point of view. At the same time, they learn about human relations, how to co-operate, and how to help each other. I find it hard to envisage Taiwan or Brazil having such a school at the moment. On the other hand, I think that the system in Canada may have its liberated disadvantages. I do believe that the methods of punishment are much too light. It is because of this freedom and softness that now we find boards facing great dilemmas concerning the discipline of students. We see that North York Board of Education is having problems with teachers being assaulted by the students. Who is to blame?: the teachers? the sytem? the environment? or the culture as a whole?

When talking about my school days, it is also vital to mention my feelings towards the people in these three countries – how they reacted towards me, my relationship with my peers and my teachers, my neighbours and my friends. It is important to reveal my feelings toward the adjustments, the struggles and difficulties faced while in Brazil and Canada.

Being a Chinese, I am proud of my country, my culture, my language and my ancestors. When I was in Taiwan, I loved the school, my friends and especially my teachers. All my peers liked me and we got along very well. I got along well with my teachers and was one of their favorite pupils. In Brazil, I continued to be a simple, industrious student. I had to make new friends and to get acquainted with the new school system, to speak a new language, to adjust to the customs and, most of all, to make my peers accept me as one of them. It took me two years to master the language and feel at ease in the environment. In the schools, my brothers and I were always warmly welcomed by the other students, and the teachers. And in the neighborhood, we were soon accepted by others. The reasons for this welcome and acceptance is that, basically, Brazilians – and the teachers among them – are warm, kind and unprejudiced people.

When we arrived in Canada in 1970, I was 16 years old, and together with my brothers, we enrolled in North Toronto Collegiate Institute in Toronto. The school was located in an Anglo-Saxon area where there were not many immigrants. Therefore, we were very much welcomed. The students as well as teachers were warm, kind and helpful to us. We were not looked down on in any respect and received more praise than attacks. When we moved to Willowdale and were enrolled in Georges Vanier Secondary School, the situation changed a bit. In this high school, although we were well received by the teachers, the students seemed cold and impersonal. We did not have many close friends, but nobody gave us any trouble. In the university, I also found most of the students very cold and distant, and, because of a different cultural background, I still find it difficult to get along with Canadians. In the high schools, I did not find much apparent racial discrimination between my peers and me. I was treated as one of them.

The reason I personally find it difficult to mix with Canadians is the gap in our different ways of looking at life, at certain behaviour and actions. Even though I have left Taiwan for so long and have lived in the western world and received a western education, I still find it easier to get along with Chinese people and to relate to them.

Although I was born in Taiwan and have traveled to so many places, I still believe that my identity is Chinese. Physically, I cannot change. I look like a Chinese, with black hair, tanned skin and black almond-shaped eyes. Spiritually, I am also a Chinese. However, intellectually, I suffer some disadvantages. First of all, I cannot write Chinese, even though I can speak and read it. Since I did not live in Taiwan long enough to know more about my country

and the Chinese customs and culture, I am not familiar with them. Nor do I have a good knowledge of Brazil; but, since I have lived there for almost seven years and had part of my education and upbringing there, I also consider myself a Brazilian. I do feel love for the country, language, the people and their way of life. Since I have lived in three countries and received influences from all of these countries, I believe that I am a product of three cultures, and that I am not fully Chinese or Brazilian or Canadian. Since I have gone through the stages of being an immigrant and know, deep in my heart, how difficult it is to face a new country, a new language, a new set of friends, new customs and new ways of life, I can understand how an immigrant child feels when he/she is put in a totally unknown environment or society. Someone who has never been in my situation would think that such adjustments of moving from one country to another are impossible to make. However, I think that as long as the child is young, the adjustment would not tremendously affect his life.

To be teacher to an immigrant child is not easy. Such a teacher has to be able to put himself/herself in the child's place in order to understand him/her as a person and his/her country, culture and way of living. In order to take an immigrant child into the Canadian society, such a teacher has to be able gradually to introduce the child to the new culture and, at the same time, be extremely careful not to offend the child's sense of his/her own.

My odyssey has taught me that the teacher of immigrants, like the teacher of all children, has to be kind, patient, understanding – and very objective.

Commitment and Resolution

Mike Cherneski

"Racism" – the word is anathema to most Canadians. It conjures up images of the horrors of Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and apartheid in South Africa. Perhaps, most of all, the average Canadian thinks of the plight of the Blacks in the United States – slavery, segregation, the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings, poverty-stricken ghettoes, the violence over court-ordered bussing, civil rights demonstrations and the riots of the 1960's. The average Canadian does not associate racism with Canada. Any effort to create such an association is likely to be met with the exclamation: "Oh no! Not in Canada."

The fact is that Canada does have a tradition of racism, religious bigotry and ethnic prejudice. The plight of the Native Peoples and the conflict between Anglophones and Francophones are well documented. However, many aspects of the tradition are not commonly spoken about. How many Canadians are aware of the anti-Oriental riots in British Columbia around the turn of the century or the riots against German-Canadians during World War I or the anti-Semitic riots in the 1930's, such as the one that occurred in the Christie Pits area of Toronto, or even the race riot between whites and South Asians that

occurred a few years ago, again in Toronto? How many are aware of the strident Canadian nativism that greeted the immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, and which allowed the Ku Klux Klan to expand into Saskatchewan in the 1920's to feed on the existing hate and fear? How many are aware of the Japanese internment camps of World War II, the legalized segregation of school children in areas of Ontario even after World War II, the lobbying and subsequent legislation to keep groups deemed to be "inferior" from immigrating into Canada, or the pseudo-Nazi gangs that formed in several Canadian cities during the 1930's and terrorized Jews?

The answer is that often a significant proportion of the population does, in fact, know about many of these incidents because they have lived through them; and yet the author, who had taken history courses, especially Canadian history, throughout his secondary school education had never heard of these occurrences until he reached university. It appears as if almost a conspiracy exists in this country to suppress the truth in order to maintain the myth that Canada is, and has always been, a country of unsurpassed racial, ethnic and religious toleration.

Perhaps this myth is the result of Canada's inferiority complex vis-a-vis its powerful southern neighbour. At least Canadians can claim to be better than the Americans in terms of race and ethnic relations. Possibly, because of Canada's multiculturalism, which includes multiracialism and a wide variety of religious denominations, the myth is sustained for fear of unleashing conflict. If this second rationale is accepted, then the concept of a multicultural society is reduced to being a political device used by government to appease the various groups and gain their support. Whatever the reason may be for the maintenance of the myth, the fact is that the myth can be potentially dangerous. To ignore the existence of racism and prejudice is to tolerate them, since there is no need to combat a non-existent problem. Yet, the groups which must cope with racism and prejudice are fully aware of the problem. For these groups multiculturalism is indeed rhetoric. No problem was ever resolved by being ignored. Sooner or later the contradictions and tensions will build to the point of explosion. Furthermore, the existence of racism and prejudice makes a mockery of the Canadian Bill of Rights. Can we deny to certain groups rights which we claim to be inherent without eventually undermining the moral basis of our rights? In short, racism and prejudice pose a potential threat to the rights of all Canadians.

(An impressive array of studies in the recent past document the issue as to what constitutes a racist act or incident, the students' perception of the racist component of their act, or the teachers' awareness of how widespread, if at all, racial attitudes are among their students and among their colleagues.)

From personal experience while on practice-teaching assignments I have been amazed at how much the staff does know and discusses in the staffroom. For example, in one school a physical altercation occurred between girls at a Saturday night party. By the following Monday during lunch, the incident was being discussed in the staffroom, including events that had led to the incident. Yet this incident had occurred off school property at a party on the week-end. An enormous amount of information can be picked up if a teacher is willing to listen to the talk in the school corridors or when the students come into a class before the period begins. Also, if a teacher appears approachable there are always a few students who will stay after class to talk, or talk to him in the halls or come to his office just to sit down and "rap". Either the teachers are ignoring what they hear or they are ignorant as to how to interpret what they have heard.

A case in point is the current phenomenon in many schools where musical preference has become a divisive issue. I first became aware of this conflict between the "discos" and

the "rockers" on my first practice teaching assignment, where I was required to teach the topic of "fads" in a Man in Society course. "Beatlemania" was selected as an example. My associate teacher[1] told me about the division between the "discos" and the "rockers" and was certain that this conflict would result in a "good" class. The class was reduced to an emotionally-charged argument as to whether or not "Beatlemania" or "discomania" was the real fad. What was impressed upon me was that the division between the opposing groups seemed to be also based along ethnic lines, with the significant number of Italian-Canadians in the class comprising the "discos" and the remainder of the class arguing against them. Also, I was struck by the vehemence of the argument and would not have been very surprised if a physical fight had developed. Later, in discussing my impressions of what had occurred with my associate teacher, I told her that it was difficult to believe that musical tastes alone could account for the behaviour of the students. The associate made some comments about "kids and their music" and said that Italians were "very expressive people". The fact that both sides were being equally "expressive" was ignored.

"Discomania" was originally predominantly a black fad and most of the artists were black, as were most of the patrons of the "discos". The music remains overwhelmingly dominated by black artists. Ethnic Italians have been attracted to the "discos". The popularity of the movie, "Saturday Night Fever", has undoubtedly been a contributing factor with its lead character being an Italian-American, named Tony Manero, who has defined and become the definitive symbol of the entire "disco-style". Quite possibly the conflict over musical preferences between the "discos" and the "rockers" is a thinly-veiled expression of ethnic prejudice against Italians or racial prejudice against blacks. I have personally heard both students and people my own age refer to the "disco"-sounding as "nigger music", and have seen people performing caricatures of a "cool" Black talking and "boogying" or of a "macho" Italian acting like Tony Manero in "Saturday Night Fever".

On my last day of a subsequent practice-teaching assignment in a large school with about two thousand students, located in a lower and lower-middle class area with members of visible minorities forming a real presence, a fistfight broke out in the main lobby of the school. It had been preceded by a "debate" between the "discos" and the "rockers". My associate at this school responded the same way as the previous associate had done. It appears to me that a divisive issue among the students which can, and does, lead to violence should be investigated. It is to be hoped that this behaviour is not an expression of prejudice; but the situation should not be ignored. The reasons must be established and solutions implemented. Violence and verbal abuse cannot be tolerated for any reason.

The example of the current "disco-rocker" controversy within the schools has been cited because it is illustrative of the failure of the school staff to admit that a problem exists, let alone actively seek to root out and expose the problem wherever it may be hidden. Probably the problem is due to the fact that some staffs choose to ignore certain patterns of behaviour or are unaware of their significance. Perhaps, too, some staff members in the schools are themselves prejudiced or have racist attitudes of their own.

Prejudice means to "pre-judge". This "pre-judgement" significantly affects how the teacher will react and respond to the student, both at the level of personal interaction and in the role of a teacher in terms of evaluating the performance and capabilities of the student involved. A simple analogy will serve to simplify the point: Why is it that a man will see a woman and "fall in love", while his friend who is with him will see the same woman and feel nothing? They both "see" her, but the image is interpreted and reacted to differently. The analogy is relevant, since the reaction is based on subjective analysis. The talk about the professional objectivity of the teachers is just talk. Objectivity is an unattainable ideal. The

teacher cannot divorce himself from his own subjective reality that makes him an individual. One cannot disassociate oneself from oneself. This is why to deal effectively with prejudice, the problem must be confronted. Only by discussing and exposing the irrationality of the fear, hatred, and hostility upon which the negative subjective statements and judgements are based can a prejudiced personality be altered. To change the subjective responses of another individual is no mean task. It requires a firm commitment and perseverance.

On the basis of the evidence, three main conclusions can be drawn. The schools of Metropolitan Toronto reflect the problem of prejudice and racism in the society at large. Secondly, teachers as well as students are affected. Thirdly, principals and teachers tend to deny, or only reluctantly admit, that the problem exists.

Incorporating multiculturalism into the school curriculum by itself is of little use in solving the problem if it fails to address the reality of racism in the wider community.

A programme aimed at the elimination of prejudice and racism must constantly strive to attain the ideal of elimination. The Ministry of Education, the school boards and the various affiliates of the Ontario Teachers' Federation must issue public statements that condemn prejudice and racism as inimical to the goal of the education system in preparing the students to be members of a multicultural society. Furthermore, the statements must recognize that the problem does exist in the schools and make a commitment to resolve the problem.

The problem must be contained. Severe disciplinary measures must be taken against both teachers and students who espouse racist attitudes and/or are involved in racial incidents. With the current surplus of qualified teachers, there is no justifiable reason to tolerate those who cannot even constrain their own prejudice and are in a position of authority where they can exhibit such behaviour. At the same time, if students are suspended from school for smoking or not attending classes, behaviours that presumably are detrimental to themselves, then there is no reason why equally severe penalties should not be enforced when they do harm to others. Furthermore, the teachers as well as the students should receive such a new disciplinary policy in writing. The students should be made to make their parents read and sign the written statement issued by the schools. This may have some impact on the behaviour of parents and constrain them from making racist comments in front of their children.

Of course, containment is not going to solve the problem, but will provide an element of restraint that will aid in the success of measures aimed directly at dealing with the problem. A compulsory multiculturalism course, including an opening unit on prejudice, which can be subsequently applied to the experiences of various groups in the history of this country, should be made part of the curriculum. Too often groups studied in the present multiculturalism course in the secondary schools are only examined in their present context. In two schools where I have taught the course, the associates did not bother to deal with the history of the various groups either in their land of origin or in Canada. The students are left with the impression that these groups are indeed foreigners with no contribution in the development of Canada. Following this reasoning, new Canadian history textbooks must be developed that discuss and portray groups, such as Blacks and Orientals, in our past history. The theme of multiculturalism must become part of all Canadian history courses, not just the multiculturalism course. Multiculturalism must be seen as a historical reality, not just a reality today. Prejudice and racism should be also discussed in other courses, such as biology, when dealing with evolution, and English, when racism occurs in literature.

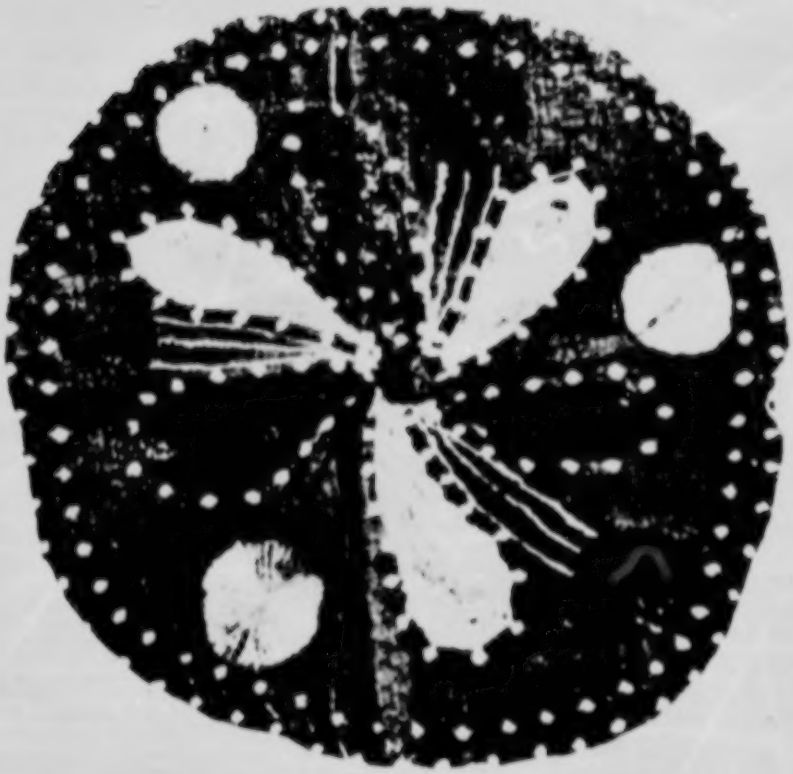
A course on multiculturalism and prejudice should be made compulsory in order to receive an Ontario Teacher's Certificate. Students who have majored in university in such areas as physics, chemistry, geography and mathematics likely do not have an adequate

understanding of multiculturalism or prejudice to prepare them to be effective teachers in a multiracial school system. Current teachers should be made to take a similar course during the summer break or as a night school course or even as some sort of regular workshop in their schools.

These are a few of the major recommendations that should be considered to deal with the problem of prejudice and racism in the schools. However, no program will be effective if it does not relate to society in general. The various levels of government will have to support the program in the schools by dealing with the problem outside of the schools. The schools and the community must be united in a commitment to seek a resolution to the problem.

---

1. An "associate teacher" is an experienced teacher in whose classes a student teacher practices his/her teaching.



Teaching in a Multicultural Setting - a guide - to myself

Michael House

Introduction

My decision to write a research paper outlining suggestions for the beginning teaching of immigrant and ethnic students was made as a result of my practice-teaching session at a high school in Toronto. I was assigned to teach typewriting to students from grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Within my first two days of teaching at the school, I had lost complete control of three classes. At times the air was white with fighter-bombers made from dittos I had distributed containing the day's work. I could not establish a working rapport with my students and was convinced that the fault was not mine. I had used the same teaching methods successfully in my previous two practice-teaching sessions when I had taught in suburban collegiates. I looked at my students: their backgrounds were predominantly Italian or West Indian; they were not New Canadians, their family income bracket was lower than middle class, and they apparently lacked any motivation to learn. I immediately presumed that the discipline problem lay with the ethnic students and I decided to teach them some manners.

I am appalled, now, at the ignorance and insensitivity that I displayed during my first week at Bromer High School.* I am convinced that there are definite prerequisites for a teacher about to enter a classroom in a "downtown" urban area. Had I only been aware of them, I am sure that I would not have made the blunders that I did. This paper, therefore, was written in order to be a guide for the beginning teacher in a multicultural classroom. In essence, it is a guide I have written for myself.

Defining "Multiculturalism"

I discovered that much of my frustration was centred in the vast issue of "multiculturalism". To what extent should "multiculturalism" be allowed to flourish in the classroom, and to what degree should the teacher impose her own personal values, based upon her upbringing, upon the students? Does she have a right to do so?

Multiculturalism has been defined as,

> . . . the right of the individual to retain and develop his cultural heritage, including language, while at the same time exercising his responsibilities and rights in the broader community . . .[1]

Particularly in the case of the New Canadian, the desire and the determination of the individual govern how, and to what extent, the cultural heritage is retained. Unfortunately, in my view, many Canadians consider the individual who retains a great deal of his cultural heritage, at the apparent expense of learning more about his new Canadian society, to be rejecting his responsibilities in the Canadian community. They might interpret, for instance, the immigrant's inability or hesitancy to master the English or French language as an indication that the individual does not wish to become a "Canadian". Many third and fourth generation Canadians simply do not realize that the imaginary line between assimilation and cultural adjustment is as broad as it is.

On October 8th, 1971, the federal government declared its policy on multiculturalism in the House of Commons. Among its nine or ten major principles two are of major importance here: (a) that the government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society and (b) the government will promote what it called "creative encounters and interchange" among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity. Surely the policy is not intended to enable ethnic groups to set up their own institutional systems by which to purposely segregate themselves and so minimize their contact with other Canadians.

Once this policy is transferred from society as a whole and put into the classroom, however, teachers have a potential problem. To what extent should they permit the ethnic student to keep his cultural symbols in the classroom in order that he might preserve his ethnic identity?

I was forced to make such a decision at Flynton High School when a West Indian student insisted upon wearing his black beret in "my" classroom. I can say, now, that I handled the situation very badly. John's hat was his identification badge, his symbol of Black Power. I insisted he remove his hat without giving him any explanation as to why he should. Perhaps the age when gentlemen remove their hats indoors is now dead. I may have insisted that he uphold an antiquated rule of a "foreign" Canadian society which, at present, may mean very little to him. If only I had discussed with John the meaning of his symbol in the Canadian culture; that is, that the wearing of a hat indoors is simply bad manners, I might have been able to prevent the bad feelings that were created.

I shudder to think how devastating it must be to a Sikh student to be forced to attend classes without his turban. Not only is the wearing of a turban dictated by the Sikh's religion, it is his identification symbol – status or cultural symbol, if you will – to show that he is a member of a powerful ruling class in India. A comparable argument can be advanced on behalf of the orthodox Jew and his yarmulke.

It is so difficult for the teacher to know where to "draw the line" in a multicultural classroom. By wearing his hat, John was infringing upon a rule of Canadian society which I respect in order to preserve or establish his ethnic identity. What "right" had I, with my conservative, white, middle-class background, to take away a part of that student's identity? I state, in answer, that I believe it is my duty in the classroom to enforce the rules of Canadian society as I know them, and to help ethnic students to adjust to these cultural changes. To be blunt, if I felt obliged to compromise my own cultural values in my own country every time I was confronted by an ethnic student who challenged them, I think I would lose my mind.

Threating the identity

A teacher can thoughtlessly threaten the personal identity of any student simply by misspelling or mispronouncing the student's name. This fact is often the case in multicultural classrooms where many names are difficult to spell and often are not easy to pronounce. Teachers should be aware that a student's name is his identity. To insult his name by mispronouncing it, or misspelling it, is to offer the student a personal insult. Simply learning how to spell and pronounce a name correctly is often a basic step in building a rapport with that student.

Similarly, to force a name on the student which is not his own is, essentially, to force an identity upon him. My name, Michal, is pronounced "Michael". I strongly object to being called "Michelle". Not long ago, many teachers would arbitrarily change the names of their immigrant or ethnic students for any number of insufficient reasons. I have a friend whose Chinese name is "Laisi", which means "Beautiful Poetry". Her family nick-named her "Cindy". Since "Cindy" is not a proper name, she was refused enrollment in a public school until her parents agreed to change her name. The school gave her parents the thoughtless choice of calling their daughter either "Cinderella" or "Cynthia", not "Laisi". Her parents chose "Cinderella", not knowing the origin of the name!

An immigrant who speaks English with a dialect must also undergo a change in his identity in order to become an accepted Canadian. George Bancroft perceptively describes the threat to his identity as he remembers the cultural adjustments he made after his arrival in Canada.

> In other words, a personality change began to occur deep within me. I had grown up saying "What o'clock" – a way of speaking that was right, good, solid, ME; and suddenly I was told that what I had always said was incorrect, bad, questionable and NOT CANADIAN. The ME I was and had been was disconfirmed. I had to build a new ME if I was to be admitted into the Canadian reality![4]

The recent immigrant in Canada has primarily two "possessions": his family and his identity. Take these "possessions" away from him by changing his identiy, and alienating him from his family, and his self-confidence is shaken. When attempting to establish a rapport with an immigrant student, I think that it is extremely important that the teacher refrain from criticizing or correcting the student's efforts to communicate in the classroom until after a rapport of mutual trust has been established.

Challenges

Teachers should be flexible without sacrificing their own identities. Let me qualify that statement. After three days, I finally established a rapport with the West Indian students in one of my classes at Flynton High. I remember that I had pointed to the blackboard and asked for a definition of what I had written. A West Indian student volunteered, "It's cool, man." Without thinking, I had replied, "Yah, man, I know it's 'cool' but what else is it?" After that statement, the West Indian students visibly relaxed in their attitude towards me. I was not mocking the student's unconventional language, nor was I criticizing him for his flippant answer. I had accepted his contribution at face value without threatening his identity. I had, however, adopted his "dialect", thereby changing my own identity.

Through their education in Canada, most immigrant and ethnic students attempt to conform to the Canadian culture. "In the search for self-respect, pride in oneself and in one's culture may be lost, but the compensation is social prestige and respectability."[5] Unfortunately, for every student who is successful, thousands of immigrant students are not. For the latter students there is often a feeling of shame and self-hatred – they have rejected their original culture without successfully acquiring a new one. Much of this harm can be prevented in our schools; yet so many teachers, rather than implement the cultural resources of the ethnic minorities in their classes, destroy them "in the name of uniformity, efficiency and standardization."[6]

Teachers of multicultural urban classes may, in some instances, have a greater challenge in motivating their students to stay in school. In some cultures, the education of girls is a low priority: their role in life is to marry and bear children. They are expected to leave school as soon as they reach the age of sixteen. In some cases, the boys are seen as a source of additional family income, with the result that when they reach the age of sixteen they are automatically put to work even though they might have the ability and the desire to continue their education.[7]

Many students, both immigrant and Canadian-born, come from low socio-economic backgrounds. I was appalled to learn from Jerome Stetner Glait, the principal of Bromer High School, that some female students are not motivated to do well in school or to further their education because they are already earning a living on the street. This "profession" pays them far more than they might expect from, for instance, a good secretarial position. Some immigrant boys, too, can hardly wait to enter the profession and acquire their first Cadillac. What teachers must not do is idealize their middle class values or pressure the students to conform to them.

Just as teachers should make themselves aware of the degree to which their values reflect their personal background, and the way these values appear to someone from a different culture,[8] so should they be aware of the cultures of the students in their classes. The majority of the visible minority people in Toronto are "recent" newcomers to Canada who have introduced new varieties of family organization, and obligations, relationship to authority, attitudes to education, discipline, religion, leisure activities, dress, food, and so on. It is the maintenance of these cultural traits which is often the cause of misunderstanding between old and new Canadians.[9]

For instance, it was not until I commenced the research for this paper that I realized East Indian boys are seen by a number of teachers as "aggressive" and that they have difficulty adjusting to the demands for non-aggressive social behaviour. When an East Indian student at Flynton High School snapped his fingers to gain my attention, I was incensed by his arrogance and rudeness. Yet when I explained to the student that I do not answer to

finger-snapping, he was extremely apologetic. Finger-snapping to gain attention has an accepted place in his culture, but not in mine.

In general, the "preferred" North American student is bright, social and out-going. Students who actively participate in discussions and who are always prepared and willing to answer the teacher's questions are looked upon more favourably than those who are not.[10] In the Japanese culture, silence is more desirable than talking. Without adequate research, it would be easy to assume that the quiet Japanese student in the classroom does not know the work, or that he is too shy to speak in class, or perhaps that he does not have a sufficient grasp of the English language. The North American tradition emphasizes the responsibility of the person to talk in order to show accomplishment: if an individual is quiet, he cannot be very bright.[11] Similarily, the Japanese and Chinese are taught that emotional restraint and self-control are signs of maturity, whereas the North American view is that "spontaneous emotional aggression . . . is the sign of maturity and self-acceptance".[12] The above examples are intended to show why I believe that knowledge of a variety of ethnic cultures should be a prerequisite for teachers of multicultural students.

Teacher Education in Multiculturalism

> A member shall strive at all times to achieve and maintain the highest degree of professional competance and to uphold the honour, dignity and ethical standards of the teaching profession.

Regulation 13 of the Provincial Teaching Profession Act Regulations makes no provision for racial prejudice, yet we are all racially biased, in some way and to some degree. The danger lies not so much in our prejudice as being unaware of our prejudice.[13] The racial bias of administrators and teachers is usually indicated through their behaviour toward the students. This behaviour could show a difference in the teacher's manner of relating to non-white and white students in such areas as indications of approval, responses to need for assistance, and in selecting students to answer questions. The difference could also be between a warm, friendly approach to a white student and a cool, business-like approach to a visible minority student. Often the racially biased teacher consciously or unconsciously anticipates that the ethnic students will be "the" discipline problem of the class. In this regard, the teacher often chastises these students for small infractions of descipline;[14] infractions which would be tolerated in other students.

Prejudice is created and spread by ignorance. I think that if teachers are to overcome their prejudices and become fair and effective teachers, they ought to do the following:

1. Be aware of how the student's culture has shaped his image of himself and the world.
2. Ask themselves what are the patterns that are unique to the student, and how could these be implemented in his new culture and in the educational process.
3. Know and understand the history, the tradition, and the social structure of the student's original culture.
4. Recognize the student's perception of the future.[15]

A beginning step in cultural awareness and self-development for any teacher could include opening her life in order to experience many possiblities. She should learn to tolerate ambiguity and change. She could, for instance, try brushing her teeth with her left hand if she always brushes her teeth with the right; read a different newspaper for a few days; rent a picture from the art gallery, and so on.

There are numerous libraries in Toronto that provide educational resources on ethnic cultures as they are in the world and, much more specifically, as they have adapted to the environment of Toronto. For instance, the Development Education Centre Reference Library, which is located at 121 Avenue Road at Toronto, contains a collection of books, pamphlets, and periodicals on social issues and on economic and social development in Canada and the Third World. The pamphlet and periodical sections of this library contain material that is not available in either the Toronto Public Library System or the university libraries in the Toronto area.[16]

In 1976, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation of Ontario sponsored an Experience '76 Project which resulted in the compilation of the *Resourse List for a Multicultural Society*. The Ministry of Education has undertaken a revision of the book which should be published in the Spring 1979.† The book provides an annotated list of multicultural resource materials with the aim of focussing "not backwards to the old countries but forwards to experiences in the new country of Canada".[17] All the entries are available in libraries in Toronto or from publishers across Canada. Included in the resource list is an appendix of ethnic community organizations which have offered further services to teachers who would like first-hand information on their ethnic group.

However, I do not think that research alone can provide teachers with the help they need to understand their multi-ethnic students and the situations that might arise in the classroom. Teachers should experience multiculturalism in action. They should make an effort to get acquainted with the neighbourhood around their school. In addition, they might experience ethnic cooking, either by eating in a restaurant or by purchasing a cookbook and learning "from scratch", buy newspapers, magazines, records or tapes of a particular ethnic group; or attend a movie without English subtitles! The learning experiences can be endless. An educational, and enjoyable, experience is a walking-tour through Toronto's Kensington Market. Here the teacher can catch the atmosphere of a community composed primarily of Portuguese and West Indian merchants. She can stop at a Portuguese fish market and see the varieties of seafood the merchants import regularly from the Azores Islands. Portuguese music is played in the street; and the potato latkes in the Jewish bakery on the corner are a treat that should not be missed! Toronto's "Chinatown" in the Dundas-College-Beverley Streets area is only a few blocks away from Kensington. A walking-tour through this area would be equally as rewarding.

The Teacher's Responsibility In A Multicultural Classroom

> Generally, students are estimated to spend at least one quarter of the whole day, and more than one third of their waking hours, with teachers. It is easy to see the enormous responsibility carried by teachers in their daily work for shaping values, providing adult models of behaviour, forming students' self-images with little more than a gesture, or a smile or frown, or a single word of approval or rejection.[18]

What a tremendous responsibility this is, even more so when it is considered that teachers tend to try to make students believe that they should aspire to the ideal of their teachers' identity. This is all the more reason why we, as teachers, should stand outside of ourselves to "observe and attempt to understand what we do in our culture, how we do it, and why."[19] It is not enough to collect and analyze data on the varieties of cultures that teachers find in their classrooms. It is enough to demonstrate to ethnic and immigrant students and their parents that we are willing to be informed and ready to help. I must let Dr. Bancroft complete his discerning analysis in his own words:

> . . . it is only by learning to respect our essential human dignity that we come to respect others; it is only as we learn to value what we are that we truly learn to value what others are; it is only as we demonstrate this value and respect within our culture that we really convince the Italian, the Creek, the Chinese, or the West Indian immigrant student and his parents of our capacity to value and respect those things that they hold dear.[20]

Recommendations

In order that teachers of immigrant and ethnic students be fair and effective within their multicultural classrooms, I would like to recommend:

1. That teachers make a concerted effort to become thoroughly knowledgeable about at least one of the ethnic groups from which their students come.
2. That teachers experience multiculuralism in action.
3. That teachers assess their own culture, values and identity in order that they be worthy of their students' respect.
4. That teachers help immigrant and ethnic students adjust to the Canadian culture without demanding cultural assimilation.
5. That teachers attempt to relate to each of their students by focussing upon the student's individuality rather than upon his ethnicity.

Conclusion

Yes, my practice-teaching session at Bromer High School did have a happy ending. Together, the students and I built a strong rapport that demonstrated mutual respect and a genuine enjoyment of each other's company. But this rapport could not have been established had I not put aside my prejudices, tried to overcome my ignorance of other cultures besides my own, and attempted to relate to each student as an individual, and not as a "typical" member of a particular ethnic community.

---

[1]Tim Rees, "The Role of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation in the Development of Multiculturalism" in *Multiculturalism*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1977, p. 13.

[2]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 1971, p. 8546. Quoted by Jean Burnet in "The Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework: An Interpretation" in *Education of Immigrant Students*, Aaron Wolfgang, ed., (Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1975), p. 206.

[3]Burnet, p. 209.

[4]George W. Bancroft, "Possibilities and Problems in the Education of Black Children" in *Black Students in Urban Canada*, Vincent D'Oyley, ed., T.E.S.L. Talk, Vol. VII, No. 1, January 1976, p. 88.

[5]Elio Costa and Odoardo Di Santo, as quoted by Mary Ashworth, *Immigrant Children and Canadian Schools* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1975), p. 178.

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]Mary Ashworth, pp. 190-191.

[8]Aaron Wolfgang, "Basic Issues and Plausible Answers in Counselling New Canadians" in *Education of Immigrant Students*, p. 140.

[9]*Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations* (Toronto: Toronto Board of Education, May 1978), p. 36.

[10]I have based this opinion on my own personal experience when I was attending high school, and on my personal preference as a teacher.

[11]Aaron Wolfgang, p. 144.

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]Joan Bodger, "Teaching Racial Prejudice at Home", *Chatelaine*, Vol. 52, No. 3, March 1979, p. 159.

[14]*Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations*, pp. 84-85.

[15]Norma V. Bowen, "Children's Cognitive Development: The Black Child In a Different Culture" in *Black Studies in Urban Canada.*

[16]Susan Wayne, ed., *The Problem Exists in the Classroom Because it Exists in the World* (Toronto: Co-operative Schools Group on Development Education, 1978), p. 27.

[17]Janet Maxwell, Banuta Rubess, Indra Sabanskis and Dorothy-Jean Todd, *Resource List For Multicultural Society*, p. i.

[18]*Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations*, pp. 110-111.

[19]George W. Bancroft, "Teacher Education for the Multicultural Reality" in *Education of Immigrant Students*, p. 173.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 183.

* a pseudonym.

† The most recent and most comprehensive publication of this kind is: *Multiculturalism and Education*, editors John R. Mallea and Edward C. Shea, published co-operatively by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation. –G.W.B.

Of Culture, Language and Reality

Doreen Kaminker

Language plays a very large part in life as we try to capture our reality. In this age of immigration, people are called upon to change their language and to adapt to the cultural norms of their new society while still maintaining their own mother tongue and their traditions, which may be very difficult from the new culture to which they have come to live.

Toronto has changed over the past several years from the dull, parochial, Anglo-Saxon community it was forty years ago to the exciting, multicultural, vibrant city it is today. I grew up in a small town in Ontario, and although I am Canadian born and had English speaking parents, I was of a minority group. We had relatives in Toronto, and since we were 'Kosher' at home, it was necessary to drive to Toronto approximately once a week to buy our meat and other kosher products. Kensington market, in those days, was the only 'ethnic' area in Toronto. It was primarily Jewish, these Jews having immigrated to Toronto from Eastern Europe in the early 1900's to escape the pogroms and persecutions there. The only other 'ethnic' area I can think of which existed at the time was that around Dundas and Elizabeth Streets where there were a few Chinese restaurants and stores. Danforth and

Coxwell was very much Anglo-Saxon – no Greeks, Italians or East Indians then – no Italians, Jamaicans, Portuguese, Spanish on College Street, Bloor Street, St. Clair Avenue West. The face of Toronto has changed, bringing with it the richness of many exotic languages, music, food, religions, histories.

I chose English As A Second Language as one of my teaching subjects. I have always had a tremendous amount of empathy for immigrants to a new land. My father and grandfather were immigrants from Russia. I grew up as a member of a minority group in an anti-semitic environment. When I was a youngster, one of the local swimming pools bore a sign "No Jews Allowed", I couldn't go to Hebrew School without fear of being physically attacked en route, and I was excluded from such important events as birthday parties given by the neighbourhood children. I know that the immigrant's problems today are different in that they are not all necessarily experiencing racial prejudice, but most of them language and cultural shock, however, I feel that they all need much encouragement and understanding in helping them to adapt to their new country.

I have taught ESL in two schools in Metropolitan Toronto – one an elementary school in Scarborough, the other a Secondary school in North York. In the following paragraphs I would like to share some of my experiences in these two schools.

The elementary school in which I did my practice teaching assignment was Glengrove. It is located in a lower middle-class neighbourhood in Metropolitan Toronto. The children I worked with ranged in age from six to eleven or twelve, grades one through six. The countries from which they emigrated were Portugal, Chile, Iraq, Cypress, Jamaica, Fiji, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Korea. The time of the assignment was late October around Hallowe'en. Most of the youngsters had been in Canada at least two years. The younger children had all found it quite easy to adapt to our customs. None of them had any trace of an accent from their mother tongue. They were all excited about Hallowe'en and dressed in costume for the exciting day. They had probably not celebrated Hallowe'en in their native countries, but young children are quite adaptable and pick up new cultural activities very rapidly, especially if it involves fun.

The younger children were quite uninhibited, for the most part, and most were anxious to tell stories at show and tell time, although a few were shy and had little to say. The Korean children stood out as particularly pleasant in personality, industrious, artistic and meticulous. They were not necessarily the most creative, but I'm sure the attitudes acquired or learned from their culture and language were responsible for their eagerness to 'do well' and their pleasant nature.

The grades three and four were, as a I recall, a small group, and had slightly more difficulty with English. One boy from Chile was the most recent arrival. I worked with him individually on several occasions. I felt he was responding well, although at the beginning he was quite reserved. While on playground duty, I observed this 'quiet' boy to be quite aggressive.

The oldest children in the elementary school were in grades five and six. In that group there was one particular boy in whom I took an interest. He was from Angola and spoke Portuguese. Both his parents were well educated and had good jobs with the Portuguese Community Centre. When this boy spoke, his teeth were clenched so that he could barely be understood. Apparently in his previous school in Toronto, his grade teacher would not permit him to leave his regular class to take ESL, and since he was experiencing culture as well as language shock, he became very withdrawn. He failed grade five and was repeating it at Glengrove. In the two months that he had been there, he showed a marked improvement. A speech therapist was working with him, he was catching up to his grade level, and when I

spoke to my associate ESL teacher following my work at Glengrove, I was told that it was hoped that this boy would be able to be promoted to the class where he actually belonged according to his age. Physically he was a big lad.

In discussions with these youngsters, most of them said that they missed their homeland a great deal and many, if given the choice, would return to their native land. However, adjustment takes time and, hopefully, in time they will feel completely at home in Canada. Any move entails an adjustment, but it is especially difficult when not only language but an entire way of life has changed.

The second school in which I did my student teaching of English as a Second Language, was Northhill Secondary which is in a middle class neighbourhood with many apartment buildings in the surrounding area. The students I taught were from such diverse countries as Hong Kong, Philippines, Jamaica, Lebanon, Greece, France, Israel, Russia, Korea.

The ESL taught at Northhill is not on a withdrawal basis but full credits are given for completing an ESL English course. The courses are divided into sections – beginners, intermediate and advanced. There is no grade thirteen English course. One must have advanced enough to go into the regular English stream in Grade thirteen so that in University there will be no problem. Geography, science, mathematics and history are also taught in ESL at Northhill Heights.

My experience was in English classes only.

There was a young Korean boy in the class who had been in Canada only a short time. He came to every ESL class he possibly could. He never took a spare but worked constantly. He always wore a smile. His manner of speaking was beautiful. He used English as well as he could but said Korean thoughts. His perception of the world was different from ours, but his sense of humour was marvellous. His father owned a Becker's Milk Store. When asked if he worked weekends, he stated that he did, but since his father owned the store where he worked, he got away with being somewhat 'lazy'. He said that he read a lot of books while on the job. A Canadian youngster working for his father would not be quite so anxious to admit that he was not working as hard as he would have to if he worked for a stranger. He would not be so 'honest' with himself and others. This trait of the Korean boy is probably due to a habitual response acquired in Korea.

Another group of teenagers with whom I worked at Northhill was from Russia. They were all Jewish and had come from different parts of Russia. For some unexplained reason there was a gross discrepancy in the quality of their education, depending upon which part of Russia they had come from. Those who came from cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, were more 'refined' in our sense of the word – they wrote better and had had a more academic education. Those who came from the Black Sea port city of Odessa were loud, aggressive, and their writing skills were poorer. Most were trained for more vocational type jobs. One young lad was about to transfer to Greendale ESL school where he would learn only English, as he had been trained as a tool and die worker in Russsia. He wanted to learn English quickly but wasn't interested in going to University. When I said goodbye to him and extended my hand to wish him good luck, he seemed shocked that a stranger would be genuinely interested in his welfare and his ultimate happiness in his new country. Again, it seemed to me, the culture and system in Russia had unconsciously bred a kind of reserve and disbelief that anyone would show warmth and kindness to someone they barely knew.

A third group of young people with whom I worked were Israeli students. They were bright, had a certain toughness about them, and were all very politically aware of what was going on in the world. They didn't have too much difficulty with the language despite the fact that their alphabet is totally different from ours and moves from right to left. There

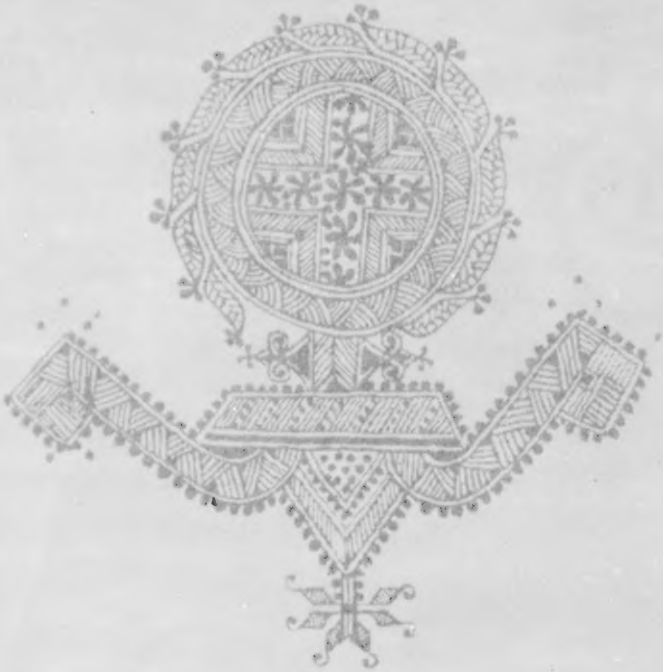
was some trouble with tenses, many of them writing exclusively in the present tense. There was one young man who was very shy and hardly spoke. It was discovered that he was a competitive swimmer and when he joined the school swimming team he found an outlet for his energy, and something that he could be good at without having to speak. He opened up considerably to his ESL teacher and proceeded to become much more communicative, inviting her to watch him when he was competing.

Israel has been in the news more than usual of late because of the hoped for Peace Treaty with Eqypt. In the Saturday, March 17, 1979 edition of the Toronto Star, there was an article headlined "Dawn of Hope After 30 Years of War and Terror." In this article there were quotations from various experts such as writers and psychologists. An Israeli psychologist, while testing creativity in Israeli children, asked a child what might be done with a shoe? The immediate response was "You can throw it at a terrorist." This may be a creative answer but clearly indicates the preoccupation with frightening content. A Canadian child, who has never experienced war or terrorist attacks, might answer "It can be worn," or "It may keep your feet dry and warm." Israeli children are taught to recognize booby traps. When I was in Israel, I saw a class of children about eleven years old out on a field trip with their teachers. The teachers each had a machine gun slung over their shoulders – always on the alert for terrorist ambushes. This stress creates aggression in Israelis. This stress is often shown behind the wheel of a car. More people have been killed on Israeli roads since the State was formed than have died in all of Israel's wars – another instance of how culture affects reality.

To conclude this essay, I would recommend that teachers of ESL be highly sensitized to the fact that youngsters from many countries have grown up with varied linguistic patterns and cultural norms. Some have different conceptions of time and space, different uses of plurals, genders, etc. and different perceptions of our thought world. There is a whole give and take between language and culture. As stated previously, people act about situations the way they talk about them.

As ESL teachers, we must have a great empathy and understanding that students who come from different cultures react differently to the same situations, that their language may have words, phrases, tenses, concepts that are difficult to translate into English.

I think that ESL teachers should learn as much as possible about the cultures from which their students come, and also some of their language. The most important quality of all for any teacher to possess is, in my opinion, simply, 'humanity'. If one displays a human understanding of people they will respond and feel more comfortable in their struggle to learn a new language and culture. They must be encouraged to maintain their own identity, traditions and self-image while learning to speak our language and adjust to our Canadian way of life.



Multiculturalism - An Experience with Reality

Helen Prince

During the summer of 1977 I was hired by the continuing education branch of an urban Board of Education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, through the Summer Experience programmes sponsored by the Government of Ontario, to work on a multicultural outreach project. The project was very enlightening and at the same time an extremely disappointing experience – enlightening in that it gave me an inside view of government administration and disappointing when I quickly discovered how questionable were some of the practices of this administration and how blatantly they spent the public taxes on the pretence of noble intentions. Despite my remaining bitterness, I do not want to dwell upon this aspect of my experience but, instead, upon the more concrete activities that I was responsible for and on those directly pertaining to multiculturalism.

The 'Multicultural Outreach Project' was introduced to us as being very 'experimental' in nature but specifically aimed at gathering information about the ethnic community which could be used in developing programmes geared to the needs of parents and children or both. There seemed to be a lack of the ethnic population involved in programmes offered by the

'Board' and they wanted to create ones which would bring more of the ethnic community out.

Because of the experimental nature of the project, it was hard to define the objectives exactly; and the seemingly daily changing of our statement of intent added to the complexity of our task.

There were basically two divisions within the project; four or five members were representing the French community, setting-up and carrying-out a French immersion course for youngsters in the area; the other represented various other ethnic groups indigenous to the municipality. Another colleague and I were assigned to the Italian community, one woman worked with the West Indian community, another with the Spanish-speaking community and another with the East Indian community. Then there was our group leader, who oversaw the two divisions and who was involved in, among other things, running up mileage on her car at the public's expense, pursuing her personal interests and taking long coffee breaks. The two sections occupied the same office space but generally ran independently of each other.

On our first day, our section met with the Board coordinator of the project and discussed various ways in which we could go about making contacts with as many people in our respective communities as possible. We 'brainstormed' (a popular governmental pastime) and came up with a wide variety of possibilities including: contacting social workers, members of the Board, principals of schools, community workers, rate-payers and other associations and, of course, door to door canvassing. We were to devise schemes for mingling within the communities, talking to people on an informal level, in an attempt to discover the make-up and needs of that community.

We began by phoning principals, community workers, and parents who had been active P.T.A. members and arranged interviews with them.

The area we were involved with was bounded by four major highway arteries which formed the "Jackson Junction" as it was popularly called. This area includes a large single dwelling sector owned by predominantly Italian families, while John St. itself consists of rows and rows of high rise apartments, townhouses and a few Ontario Housing projects. Families of varying ethnic backgrounds live in these dwellings. Most are working class through white collar workers and recent immigrants from the West and the East Indies, other third world countries, or newcomers from other parts of Canada.

Recently, this area has been the centre of a controversial debate on the state of suburbia; a dream turned nightmare; a classic example of bad urban planning – high density population, lacking in sufficient social services, over-crowded schools, chronic traffic problems, one of the highest crime rates in Canada and racial tensions. The sea of neat modest to upper-middle class Italian homes which surround this "Jackson Junction" forms a sharp contrast. This oasis of comfort is popularly called Little Palermo which, because of its isolation, has become a social ghetto.

Some of these aspects we were briefed upon by the Board, other information was gathered from interviews, but, for the most part, just by frequenting the area one became very conscious of the ills with which it was plagued. It was rather tragic to see how deeply rooted and widespread these problems were but frightening to realize how little the governments involved were doing to remedy the situation.

For the first two weeks we came together as a group every few days and shared our experiences, progress and problems. Since the project was rather vague beyond the aim to develop programmes, we found we were receiving vague feedback. People seemed to think that we weren't being sincere or didn't know what we were doing. Of the few people we

initially talked to, we received suggestions which the Board offered and these people were unaware of, they had no idea what programmes they'd like, and did we have any suggestions? Or they were satisfied with the existing ones. More often than not there was a general apathy and lack of concern with regard to programmes the Board had to offer.

When we began calling up people for interviews, we felt rather ill at ease since we had little confidence in a project which was so vague in its objectives. After a few interviews, we also realized that going into people's homes and approaching people in the community was a very sensitive undertaking. Although people were flattered at the thought of such an interest in their community, they had little confidence in our sincerity, since we knew about as much as they did about developing programmes. We took our complaints to our group leader who was our liaison with the Board co-ordinator. We felt that we hadn't been properly briefed or prepared for our duties and that no one had really done any sound groundwork beyond the conception of the idea – no guidelines or Board policy had been considered or mentioned to us. Our complaint was returned with a rather derogatory lecture on our lack of initiative and resourcefulness, and that we hadn't been hired to be 'spoonfed'; moreover, we were almost accused of lacking sensitivity and misrepresenting the Board in our dealings with the public. We were duly warned of our obligations to the Board.

It seemed apparent that the Board had conceived the Multicultural project as a token project aimed at creating summer employment for students. Their sincerity seemed very lacking and their concern in our project did not go beyond perhaps laying the groundwork for future summer employment. Our work concerning the Multicultural issue wasn't going to have any repercussions and seemed to be a joke from start to finish.

Our spirits rather dampened, we decided to do some homework to find out exactly what was available with regards to courses and programmes offered by the Board. It was suggested to us that perhaps a women's group could be a possibility for development. We set up a list of more specific questions and possibilities for programmes and continued our interviews.

We learned from the principals in the area that there seemed to be a power struggle between the various cultural groups which divided the Italian community among their own people, namely the people from the north and the south. One principal felt that the Italians seemed suspicious of anything Canadian and disliked Canadians on the whole; and that generally, Italian parents didn't seem to stray beyond family events and did not participate in school affairs. For example, in his particular elementary school with an enrollment of 1300 students, rarely did more than fifteen parents show up for parents night. He felt that any programme which could form a bridge between the Canadian and the Italian cultures would be beneficial.

One of our most vital and informative contacts was a community organization called CALDONE which, while working with all members of the community, was originally designed to help Italians. Among other activities the centre ran a club for women and senior citizens, E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) classes in conjunction with the Board and counselled members of the community on a myriad of problems. Despite the fact that this organization was considered to be more of a North American institution by the Italian community, since it was run by Italians it was accepted. Over the years the community workers had gained a good reputation and there was a relationship of trust between themselves and those who frequented the organization. Since we were not Italians ourselves, CALDONE proved to be an invaluable link to the Italian community.

During the summer, prior to our contact with it, CALDONE had run a summer day-camp for youngsters (7-14 years of age) in the neighbourhood and had applied for another

grant to continue the programme that summer, but had been refused. The argument against allowing them the grant was that there seemed to be very little difference between what they were offering and the programme of the Board day-camp. CALDONE maintained that the community had little faith in Board-run day-camps and, as a result, very few Italian children attended them. Since CALDONE was located in the unused wing of an elementary school, the workers were aware of many children just hanging-out in the school yard. When they realized what the problem was, they felt the trust that the community had in their organization would attract those children who were not allowed to attend Board-run camps. Ultimately, it was hoped that CALDONE-run camps would serve as a means to encourage parents to enroll their children in Board-run activities.

Since working with CALDONE would give us the necessary base from which we could contact the community, it was decided, after a futile two weeks of interviewing, that my colleague and I would set up and instruct a children's day-camp. Consequently, our objectives became two-fold; provide for the needs of these children and obtain information useful in developing future programmes. The setting seemed ideal for we could meet, talk with, and observe the people attending the activities at CALDONE, the children and their parents that we would be working with, yet doing it all in a very subtle, informal way, for we would no longer be total outsiders but have a purpose within a respected organization.

We rather hurriedly put together a programme which consisted of sports activities and a film session in the morning, and arts and crafts in the afternoon. Although we had experience related to such a project and were looking forward to it, we really did not have enough time to prepare properly and to organize it. It was almost an overnight creation and we weren't fully aware of what we were getting ourselves into. We soon found that running the day-camp kept us more than busy and it was almost impossible to find time to talk to parents. Consequently, most of our information was gathered through our experiences with the children and observations with people who worked at or frequented CALDONE.

From the people who worked at CALDONE, we learned that since such an organization was alien to the Italian culture it was difficult for them, at first, to establish themselves. Through time and a lot of effort they were able to set up programmes which the community needed. However, tradition was hard to penetrate. For example, the senior citizens centre was used exclusively by men – seemingly a reflection of the culture: the women stay at home, the men go out. The men were ardent members though, for there was really no where else for them to gather; no piazza or local cafe. The centre was available for their use every afternoon, since in the mornings the space was needed to run E.S.L. classes. They gathered after lunch like clockwork and were often there early just waiting to get in, while others would hang out at the local plaza to kill time. It's understandable why they were so happy about their centre, for it offered them congenial surroundings and privacy to carry out any activities they chose to. Most played cards and the like, listened to records and carried on very heated discussions.

It was absolutely fascinating to walk into the room while they were there, for it really made one feel as if one had been transported to Italy. I became poignantly aware of how important their culture was to them and how lost they seemed without it. I'd often see them waiting around before the centre opened and they looked rather sad and dour and very out of place; yet, once they were joined with their friends in a native ambiance, they were really in their element and became the most animated characters you could meet.

The Italian women of the area seem to be victims of their suburban dream house and the traditions of their culture. For many, the move to the suburbs has been the result of many hard years of work. However, they soon find themselves missing the closer-knit com-

munties of the inner-city neighbourhoods and the freedom they had with stores and other conveniences within walking distance. Often their children have grown up and they have a lot more time on their hands than they know what to do with. Some younger and/or more liberated go to work and yet, for many others, this is unheard of, for the 'women's place-is-in-the-home' mentality prevails. It is this mentality, believed not only by men but also by the women themselves to be their role, which has hampered the success of the women's centre at CALDONE. The women seem reluctant to join or discouraged from joining the women's group, for they cannot justify such an indulgence; their duty is to their family. Consequently, at any given time while we studied the community there were only between 10 and 20 women who participated in the programme.

Because of the sensitivity and narrow view with which women are regarded in the community, the women's centre was run in a very low key informal way. The women were, for the most part, involved in fabric making and arts and crafts activities; in addition, yoga and other exercise classes were also offered. Occasionally trips were organized, parties held and once a year a bazaar was held to display and sell the works which the women had created. As far as I know, there was no fee to participate, or perhaps only a nominal fee for materials, but, for the most part, the activities were financed by the money raised at the bazaar. Day care was also provided for those attending.

On the whole there really didn't seem to be a good reason to account for the poor turn-out, for there was no threatening or aggressive "women's lib" push behind the centre. The attitude of the centre was to help these women overcome their loneliness and achieve a greater self-awareness and understanding of themselves, and perhaps increase their sense of independence so that they could enjoy fulfilling experiences beyond their role as wife and mother.

Our most revealing observations took place with the children who participated in the day-camp. With the exception of two East Indian children and a Japanese child, our group of 25 youngsters was exclusively of Italian extraction. At the outset, our group was fairly evenly divided with regard to sex. We found that the cultural traditions of the children were deeply rooted in their thoughts and actions. They seemed to be the victims of a cultural ghetto, few had visited or had a concept of the rest of the city; they were ignorant of other cultures and expressed rather racist attitudes; they were also surprisingly ignorant of their Italian history and its language aside from specific regions of Italy and the Canadian-Italian which they spoke, furthermore they also expressed very sexist and stereotyping attitudes.

There were many instances over the five-week period of this day-camp which supported these views. The following are just a few examples: the two East Indian children were constantly made fun of, harassed or ostracized. Despite these experiences, and, of course, with a great deal of encouragement on our part, they persevered and were eventually accepted by the group; the Japanese child unfortunately did not last the first week; after being threatened with a beating by a few of the older boys he never returned and apparently was quite traumatized by the whole event.

On a daily basis we encountered incidents of sexism and stereotyping: the girls participated in activities which were feminine and would with reluctance become involved in physical sports; the boys on the other hand disliked arts and crafts for they felt it to be too feminine; the girls were submissive and quickly gave in to the boys' demands; the boys were assertive if not physically aggressive towards the girls. The boys generally had a low opinion of women and this was most evident, if not blatantly expressed, in their attitude toward us, for they constantly challenged and argued our decisions and actions especially in areas they felt to be male territory such as refereeing of sports. When we received the help of a male

volunteer his decisions were almost revered.

Although there were exceptions to every generalization and/or instance I have stated, I have tried to include only situations which involved the actions of the majority of a group. Fortunately the attitude of the members changed and improved greatly by the end of the five weeks. We ended up with a very close-knit caring and sharing group of kids. Unfortunately, within the first two weeks also we lost the most aggressive and "macho" of our boys and the most feminine or least assertive of our girls. So that, by the end of the period we had a group of fifteen.

Although we met only a couple of the parents, most of the children were quite vocal about their family life. It seemed that the family unit was very strong and the hierarchy relatively clear-cut: father, mother, eldest-youngest in terms of their influence and status. The occupations of these parents included: labourers, tradesmen, white and blue collar workers as well as independent businessmen; at least half of the mothers worked.

We amassed a large amount of data from our observations, but, in the final analysis, we had to consider, above all, that the actions and attitudes of a small group of people were not necessarily indicative of the group as a whole. Consequently we gave consideration only to areas which we felt were majority situations and were brought repeatedly to our attention, areas such as cultural isolation, which seems to contribute to the incidents and attitudes of racism, sexism and stereotyping.

As a result of my experience in this community over the summer I recommend the following:

a) Workers working in ethnic areas should be properly briefed as to the make-up and nature of that community;
b) if programmes are established they should be run through and in conjuction with existing ethnic community organizations such as CALDONE, thereby establishing the necessary trust to bridge the two cultures;
c) the history of their culture should be promoted as well as the Canadian history and present cultural milieu; the latter should be considered in a subtle, informal way perhaps through the aid of the media; and
d) children should be taken on excursions outside their neighbourhoods.

The West Indian Immigrant in the Canadian School

Deborah Kiladze

Cultural mosaic. Multiculturalism. Immigration. Italian. Ukranian. West Indian. Portuguese. Greek. The list goes on. These are terms which are becoming more and more frequent in daily usage as the impact of increasing waves of immigration make themselves felt in Canadian society. Many issues arise out of this situation. There is, on the one hand, the advantage from the Canadian point of view, of an influx of people, the majority of whom possess skills which are of use in the society, but on the other hand, many new immigrants are offered the lower paid jobs and must contend with discrimination problems. We must remember, too, that many of the immigrants are children who must attend Canadian schools.

In the early 1960's, when immigration was at a relatively low level, educating the immigrant child was a challenge that went largely unnoticed, and the prevailing attitude was a "melting pot philosophy", which threw the student into the classroom to sink or swim. But, as the numbers of immigrant children grew in the classroom, it became obvious that this would no longer work and that the needs of these children must be met. The prevailing philosophy now is one of a multicultural education. Multicultural education, as the task force on multiculturalism of the Toronto Board of Education perceived it:

- values the presence in our society of many cultures;
- accepts and supports the cultural pluralism of our society and eschews tolerating it;
- recognizes the right of different cultures to exist as separate and distinct entities;
- acknowledges the contribution of these groups to the development of our society; and
- places greater emphasis on the similarities and less on the differences that exist among people of varying backgrounds.

The establishment of the goals of multicultural education requires an examination of the problems faced by immigrant children in the schools. It would be fitting, then, to examine some of the problems faced by a select group of immigrants, and to determine what is being done to solve some of these problems. The West Indian student has been chosen for this purpose, not only because as a West Indian immigrant myself I can identify with these problems, but more so because, as 1972 statistics show, the West Indian represented the second largest group of immigrants; and numbers have steadily grown. In 1975, the West Indian population in Toronto was estimated to be 60,000, thirty per cent of which was represented by children in school.

Problems may arise for such a student even before he starts school. He has left a country into which he has sunk his roots and, in a matter of a few hours, finds himself in a new country which is to become his home. Extreme culture shock may set in – he must adjust to an urban life coming from a rural one; he is no longer free to "roam, swim in the sea, and pick mangoes like back home", but in contrast finds himself confined to an apartment in summer and imprisoned therein in winter.

The child may also face problems within the family. Many West Indian families migrate to Canada in stages with perhaps one parent arriving, then the other, and finally, one by one, the children arrive. For the newly arrived child, adjustment to the family can take a while. His parents have settled into the Canadian way of life, while he is still "in the West Indies", for all intents and purposes; and also, in his parents eyes, he too has grown and changed over the years. This adjustment can lead to many conflicts which must be overcome.

There is another aspect in the West Indian family which must also be considered: many families are single-parent families, usually maternal, hence the mother is forced to work. When she returns home from work, she is often tired and tends to take her frustrations out on the children, thereby leading to a poor relationship. Family problems, although they may be solved at this early stage, may again flare up; when the child enters school, makes friends, and himself becomes caught up in the Canadian way of life. The values offered to the child by the affluent, materialistic, Canadian society may be in sharp conflict with the values held in the home, values which reflect the more conservative outlook to which the parents have been accustomed in the West Indies and to which they cling.

When such conflicts arise, the West Indian child faces a dilemma. There is no other family member, such as an aunt or a grandmother, from whom he can seek advice – both because these family members have been left behind in the West Indies, and because it is not the norm there to go to public agencies for advice. In Canada, the child and even the parent tend not to use these services, despite the fact that several are being established in different parts of the city.

These cultural and family problems place the child in a trying situation even before he enters the classroom, where his problems become compounded. The West Indian child is distinguished from his classmate in two major ways – he speaks with a distinct dialect and

his skin colour is different, since the great majority of West Indian immigrants are black. The latter, unfortunately, presents an ideal opportunity for those students who are the children of racist parents, and who have had this attitude instilled in them, to project this sick mentality in the form of racist comments and names to West Indian students. Epithets such as "black bitch", "Paki" – for an East Indian hailing from Guyana! – have frequently been hurled. Unfortunately, I have seen even teachers manifesting these racist attitudes – though their manifestations have been more low-keyed and subtle. It is no small wonder that West Indian students find it difficult to make friends in their new school. This lack of friendship leaves the child feeling as an outsider.

Several other factors inherent in the school system contribute to this feeling of being an outsider. Not only is the layout of the school buildings with their mazes of halls and corridors, and closed classroom doors, very intimidating, but there is a new method of teaching, the discovery method, to which the child must adapt; there is the whole concept of projects and essays, which is alien to the West Indian student, and the consequent involvement of libraries. Libraries – is there a West Indian immigrant student who has ever had to research an essay? I venture to say "No". Then there is the matter of timetabling – all those courses from which to choose in high school! What are Level 4 and Level 5 programs? What are credits? How many do I need? Of course, there is the guidance counsellor to offer help, but there are hundreds of other students who need help also, and time is limited. So the West Indian student must try to fend for himself and sort out his difficulties.

In addition to these difficulties in adjusting to school life, there is another major problem which faces the West Indian student. Many of them end up attending vocational rather than academic institutions; many have been placed in grades below those equivalent to their grade level; and this type of placement has led both students and parents to feel that some form of discrimination is being practised. The high expectations which parents hold for their children are destroyed.

But the situation must also be considered from the school administrator's point of view. West Indian students arrive in Canada with varying levels of academic background. The majority of them are weak in Mathematics and have had little or no background in Canadian Studies. Moreover, there is the dialect situation, which can be a problem in itself. The administrator is then faced with the problem of placing the student in a grade equivalent to his age, and letting him cope with the weaker subjects, or having him in a lower grade level, where he can catch up in his weak subjects while coping with the new school situation. The latter is the preferred course. It is easy to say that the best solution would be the administration of intelligence tests, but unfortunately many of these are biased culturally. Fortunately many teachers recognize this cultural bias and do not administer any sort of standardized test to immigrant students. The problem remains, however, that the intelligence of some West Indian students is underestimated, hence they are placed in lower grades or vocational schools.

Despite all the above school-related problems, I feel that the single largest problem faced by the West Indian student is coping with his dialect. From the first day of school, he is made aware that he speaks differently as a result of the stares he receives when he speaks, and from the number of times the word "Pardon" is thrown at him. This is extremely disconcerting and can cause the child to withdraw into himself, and to speak only when spoken to. I have found from my own experience that this embarrassment hastened me to pick up the Canadian accent, so that at least I sound more like the majority. But my speech always seems strained, and there is no better feeling than to be confronted by another West Indian, at which time I can lapse back into the dialect and know that I will be understood.[1]

In addition to not being understood by others, the West Indian also faces the possibility that his language will be misinterpreted as "bad" or "broken English". This can create a bad self-image in the individual, which is obviously uncalled for.

I think some mention should be made, at this point, of the difficulties which the teachers themselves experience in dealing with the West Indian student. The most obvious, of course, is coping with the dialect, as was alluded to above. I feel that the teacher may tend to ignore the West Indian when asking for replies to questions, to avoid his own embarrassment at not being able to understand the response. Consequently, he does not get a full picture of the progress of the student, although some indication is given in written work. But the situation may be viewed from another standpoint, which is, that of the student. As previously mentioned, the student may become withdrawn as a result of negativism displayed towards his dialect. This may result in "passive non-involvement, a sense of dullness and a lack of vibrancy". The teacher, upon observing a child of this nature, may develop the attitude that the child is of low intelligence, which may not be the case at all.

The majority of teachers would be given credit for the fact that they do recognize the problems and needs of West Indian immigrants, and, indeed of other immigrant students. However, they face severe limitations in dealing with these problems. Firstly, it must be remembered that the West Indian student is not the only student in the teacher's classroom. All the other students also need the teacher's attention; it is only fair that they receive this. Not only is class size a limiting factor here but also the differing abilities of the various students who thus need individual help. We might say, then, that the teacher could give help after school, but we must remember that there is often a great deal of planning to be done, and also teachers are only human, and so do not often feel up to counselling youngsters after a hard day's work.

Many teachers feel that, generally, there is a lack of organized multicultural programs; this lack contributes to the feeling of inadequacy in dealing with problems.

The problems experienced by both the pupil and the teacher having been recognized, it is necessary to examine some possible solutions to these problems. Because the welfare of the student is the major issue here, let us look at solutions to his problems first.

The West Indian dialect has been cited as a major concern to the student in adjusting to school life. The general trend in alleviating this situation has been to place West Indian students in ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. But, is this really what is needed? ESL programs are designed for students whose first language is not English and who must therefore be taught the language in its entirety. The West Indian student, in my opinion, would be wasting a great deal of time in a class of this nature, because he already knows the English language.

The major concern for the West Indian is to be made aware of how his dialect differs from standard Canadian English, and hence to be able to discern the areas of his written work which would be considered as "bad" English by his teachers, and to be able to write in the acceptable way. For instance, the dropping of "ed" in the past tense in spoken dialect might easily be transferred to the written page even though the student knows that what he intends in meaning is the past tense. For this reason, some boards have instituted English as a Second Dialect programs which involve a wide range of language activities such as practice in listening, in pronunciation, and in inflections. The aim of such programs is not to eliminate the dialect but to teach alternate ways of verbalizing in similar situations.

It is obvious that aiding the West Indian student in coming to terms with his dialect is only a stepping stone in his overall adjustment to school life. Academically speaking, it was noted earlier that the West Indian student enters the Canadian school with a poor back-

ground in Mathematics and Canadian Studies and in skills such as project work and essay writing. It was noted, also, that the students were put in lower grades to allow some catching up in these areas. Many students also attend remedial classes in Mathematics. However, they still confront the other two areas in which they are poorly skilled. I think that it is the duty of the individual subject teacher to work along with the student in the first of these projects or essays, providing assistance in terms of library skills, selection of certain facts over others, presentation of their data, and so on, to teach the student the necessary skills, and also to give him the confidence that his needs are being recognized and met.

The third aspect of the student's needs are the cultural-social ones. Probably the easiest way for the West Indian students to feel that they belong is for them to be involved in some sort of after-school club, the purpose of which would be to have students gather to discuss common problems and experiences. In this way, they would also be able to meet other West Indians and establish some friendships. However, other students in the school should also be encouraged to come to activities of the club to avoid the isolation of the West Indians as a group. The club should serve to help students overcome their initial fears, but then should aid in the integration of students with the rest of the school. I feel, also, that it would be a good idea to have parents of the West Indian student attend meetings with their children. In this way a common bond could be established between parents and students via the school, and might aid in solving some of the family problems alluded to earlier.

The above suggestions would, I am sure, be useful to the student. However, we must remember that in addition to the student's contact with his peers in school, the teacher plays a very important role in the student's life; hence the teacher must come to terms with the presence of students of varied cultural backgrounds in his class. Although we are primarily concerned with the West Indian student, the following comments apply generally to the teaching of all immigrants.

I feel, first of all, that any teacher faced with a multicultural classroom, must have some sensitivity to the needs of these students. To respond to these needs, the teacher requires some kind of background information in the various cultures. As noted earlier, many teachers have stated that there has been no training in their profession to deal with these matters. There is, then, a definite need for some sort of a course which could prepare teachers for the problems which are experienced by the students. This course, as I see it, should present films on the different countries so that teachers can see the varied lifestyles, and hence identify and associate the students in their classes with their backgrounds. Moreover, speakers of various nationalities should be brought in to discuss their feelings about the education of their children. I think having students speak for themselves would be an added dimension. Obviously, this will not solve the problems of **every** student for **every** teacher, but at least the teachers will have a better background to deal with situations than they do now.

Although the above suggestion is a very important one, I feel that an even better solution would be the hiring of at least one teacher of each nationality represented in the school, so that for any severe problems which arise in the school, this person could at least speak to the child in the language or dialect in which he is most comfortable and hence cushion the problem. I feel that the child would be much more comfortable in talking to someone with a common background. I feel strongly about this as a result of my Practice Teaching background. It was very obvious to me that many of the West Indian students approached me more readily to obtain answers to questions about their work than they approached their usual teacher. Although I did not have to deal with any actual problems, I feel that this experience strengthens my suggestion. I realise, of course, that there could be problems associated with this idea in terms of preference in hiring teachers, but in no way am I advo-

cating a quota system or that a person's ethnic origin should be a deciding factor. The free choice of staff will result in excellent educators being drawn from many cultural backgrounds.

Underlying all this training and background knowledge, however, the most basic ingredient for the teacher's relationship with the immigrant pupil is his feeling of warmth toward his pupils and the attitudes which he has toward them. I will never forget the experience I had during Practice Teaching when my associate and I were marking a set of Math tests and he came upon one in which the student received a very low mark. He turned the paper over, looked at the name and remarked " West Indian. I thought so." He needed to say nothing more, because with those few words and his tone of voice, he told me what his attitude was; and I realized that no matter how much training is given to a teacher in a multicultural classroom, it is the personal feelings of the teacher which will provide the greatest impact.

We have examined the problems associated with one group of immigrants, the West Indians, in the Canadian school, and offered some possible solutions to these problems. In attempting to develop a "multicultural education" it is necessary to examine the entire spectrum of cultures in the schools, and to find some way of integrating the curriculum in order to encompass the diversity. I do feel that the whole idea is possible and can be successful. It will take time, but this is necessary for the ironing out of attendant problems. We remember, however, that in the development of this multicultural education, we must not forget "Canadian" as a culture, and that with Canada as the "host" country, we must not, in our anxiety to establish the immigrant cultures, eliminate the Canadian culture.

---

1 The full significance of this statement emerges when it is realized that the author is "white", hence not automatically identified as "West Indian". Most studies of West Indians focus, in reality, on the working class rural Black student, or those from the disadvantaged shanty towns of inner cities. Studies of the children from middle and upper middle class West Indian homes and a variety of West Indian ethnocultural backgrounds are either non-existent or rather rare. –G.W.B.

Ethnic Differences and the Breakdown of Communication

Laureen Gunning

At almost any social gathering, the conversation eventually swings to discussion of an ethnocultural theme. Where sides are taken, the persons giving their opinions (which may be based on experience or not) can become quite vehement. The whole topic of racial disharmony is a sensitive area, and is especially so today in Canada. The threat of Quebec's separation causes a generally heightened awareness of cultural differences, and the problems they can produce.

In many arguments on racial themes there are the defenders, who take arms against the foe on behalf of the absent injured minority. An interesting topic for investigation would be the question of motives for defense. Has the defender got a close personal friend of the nationality under fire? Is the defender trying to make his own hidden prejudice? Or is it simply the pathetic appeal of the underdog which prompts the defender's support?

Very often, the defender's battle campaign is along these lines: "They are no different from us – they just speak another language. People should not call them down because of a difference in tongue." Or, "They are a different colour, but they are the same as we are

under the skin." Or, "We all worship the same deity, but some call Him by another name." This attitude smacks of wishful thinking. It is so easy to get along with people of similar interests and tastes . . . If only we could convince members of disparate groups that they had a lot in common, they would accept each other, become friends, and there would be no more problems . . . so says the ostrich, as he buries his head. Unfortunately, no amount of sand can cover the problems generated by racial differences in Canada today. Yes, Virginia, there are racial differences that are more than skin-deep. We must acknowledge these differences, understand that they are there to remain despite efforts to eradicate them in forging the ideal One Canada. We can even cherish certain differences in celebrations of our wealth of heritage – for example, Toronto's overwhelmingly successful annual Caravan.

Our country has been called an ethnic salad bowl in comparison to the American melting pot. We are to be proud to have distinct chunks of diverse cultures sprinkled throughout the country. But along with cultural variances that provide a mutual enrichment in artistic and culinary ways are the other, less tangible, differences some of which threaten inter-group harmony. These cultural differences are the insidious little seed-sowers of prejudice and stereotypes.

The Irish are red-haired and hot-tempered; the Polish are hopelessly dense; the Jewish are conniving money-grubbers; the Italian males are lascivious; the Mexicans are lazy; the Dutch are compulsively clean; the Scotch are stingy; the Americans are loud and brassy . . . and so on *ad nauseum*. These abominable pigeonholes are reinforced daily on television by reruns of old movies such as the Our Gang comedies and westerns, by popular comedians, by poorly-edited Social Studies textbooks, by jokes, and by parents.

There comes one day in every child's life when he realizes that his parent is prejudiced against some minority. He has been taught about the jaundiced-eyed monster in school, and then suddenly recognizes a chance parental remark as evidence of it: prejudice! Forthwith there ensues a campaign to apprise Mon or Dad of the true facts of life. The youngster blossoms into an idealist, and for some years maintains a bulldog watch against any hint of stereotyping creeping into his own vocabulary or thoughts. Then, sadly, there comes one adult day when he must admit to himself that certain ethnic groups do definitely display characteristic behavioural or attitudinal traits. Oh, disillusionment, the price of maturity!

This is the turning point. The individual can go one of two ways. He can capitulate to prevailing social pressures and grant that all the stereotyping he ever encountered was basically true. Or, if he is perceptive, he can recognize that there exist fundamental cultural differences which cause minorities to be misunderstood. The behaviours of minorities are often construed as having been motivated by the attitudes which would have motivated members of the majority. Ponder the following as an example:

John sees Tarzan drop a candy wrapper on the sidewalk, and he says to himself, "Tarzan is an impudent slob. He has no respect for anti-litter laws, and he could not care less that he is polluting our environment." Unfortunately, John does not realize that back in the jungle, there was nothing that was not biodegradable; there were no garbage cans, nor any civic legislation. As far as Tarzan is concerned, he is eating the North American equivalent of a banana, and he knows enough not to eat the skin.

John is not aware that there are core differences between himself and Tarzan. He assumes that Tarzan is defying a basic inbred respect for legal statutes and for the environment. Respect for such things is a part of John's value system. But value systems and attitudes to life in general differ markedly from nation to nation.

Attitudes toward work are one example. Mention is sometimes made of the Protestant work ethic, under which white Anglo-Saxon Protestants reputedly operate, putting in a full

day's work, five days a week. Comparatively, the Chinese Canadians seem far more industrious. Look behind the counter of any corner grocery which is open 105 hours a week, and you will likely find either the Chinese owner or one of his family. The faculties of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of British Columbia are known to offer rigorous courses of high excellence, and the competition for admission is fierce. Well over half of the students enrolled are of Chinese extraction.

One might charge that the author is guilty of stereotyping the Chinese people as hard-working. Though the evidence which points to this conclusion is empirical, the "facts" do **not** "speak for themselves"; only the speaker speaks for himself. The film *The Eye of the Beholder*, is a dramatic illustration of the non-existence of objectivity. A sequence of events in two days of an artist's life were shown; then five people who came into contact with him gave their interpretations of his actions and character. The dramatizations of their reports were shockingly disparate, yet each one of them contained strictly "the facts" as observed by one witness.

The point is that what any individual believes he sees is true for him. The most fundamental basis for learning is conclusion drawn from direct observation and experience. Children learn – most effectively the hard way – that something hot will burn. They do not make repeated trials to test their hypotheses; they trust their unpleasant experiences to be proofs of life's truths. So, when an individual forms an opinion based on what he has observed of an ethnic group's behaviour, can he fairly be accused of being prejudiced? He is only acting on his experience which is valid and true for him.

It is unfortunate that the cognitive function of learning by experience should be operant in interpersonal relations. Consider the attitude of the author's uncle, who is a foreman in a mill in Ocean Falls, B.C. He takes a very dim view of the Quebecois as a result of his experience with some French-speaking mill workers – who hail from New Brunswick. "They are lousy workers: always fighting and kicking up a ruckus." His attitude toward Quebec is, "Let 'em separate, and good riddance – the sooner, the better." One unpleasant encounter, and a whole group is generally damned by it. Regrettably, it happens repeatedly; an unfavourable experience with a small, perhaps not quite representative sample, is possibly the basis of most ethnic prejudices. There is a fine line of distinction between acknowledging core cultural differences on the one hand and drawing from those perceived differences generalized conclusions about behaviours on the other.

Let us now consider some of the many ways in which ethnic groups can differ from one another. Attitude to life was touched on in a brief look at the work ethic of two nationalities. Other basic values whose importance varies markedly from group to group are honesty, piety, filial devotion, thrift, chastity, sobriety, physical fitness, self-respect, social status, material wealth, honour, cleanliness, punctuality and protocol. For one example, the extremely high priority placed on family honour in Japanese society makes it inevitable that a student who fails to pass the gruelling university entrance examinations commits suicide. Most Canadians find the practice incomprehensible because they cannot relate to such a heavy emphasis on family honour. Involved also are the values placed on education and the importance of life, both of which are different in Japan. Japanese children are registered on waiting lists years before they are even conceived, so that they may attend the best kindergartens, which in turn provide access to the best schools. Kamikaze was the name of the special attack force of Japan's Naval Air Force during World War II. It was a suicide organization whose chief membership requirement was a desire to die serving the Empire. The Kamikaze pilots smashed their bomb-laden planes into enemy ships.

Related to the values of cultural groups are their general emotional characters. Some

tend to be very demonstrative, others more reserved; some seem to be aggressive, others are regarded as self-effacing. But these traits are not automatically apparent. They can be very subtle. A person confronted with someone from another cultural background is sometimes only aware of a vague feeling of dislike or apprehension without being able to pinpoint the cause of his discomfort. After much reflection about why he was "rubbed the wrong way", one might conclude that "he just seemed pushy; he interrupted private conversations; he always gave unsolicited opinion." The aberrant behaviour would most likely be acceptable in the offender's society. The "pushiness" could be regarded as normal polite interest in others, and the opinions could be given dutifully in the cause of general public interest.

The author spent six weeks in 1976 living with a family in a small village near Rivère-du-Loup, Quebec, and has since been to Quebec City twice to visit friends. A certain atmosphere pervades French Canadian social gatherings. It is, thinks one, the personal liberation enjoyed by the Quebecois, which provides a mellow atmosphere of ease. They are unbound by concerns about self-image; there seem to be few insecurities and jealousies. Each person appears to possess a quiet assurance which allows him to accept others as they are, just as he accepts himself, and furthermore, to delight in it. The small-group social tone is free and easy, bereft of any tension. Little wonder that the Quebecois have a nickname for the English Canadians: *les tête-carrés* – the blockheads. Are we not a little square and wooden by comparison?

Well, that is one person's assessment of an aspect of the French Canadian character, based on relatively brief periods of exposure. It demonstrates two things: first, that there are palpable differences between French and English-speaking Canadians; and second, how one person's opinion of another cultural group was formed.

There is a cultural minority in Canada which places a very high priority on trust. It is not an ethnic minority, but is as misunderstood as any ethnic group, and is discriminated against in many ways. The deaf are as close-knit a group as can be found anywhere. They are segregated from the mainstream by the fact that ours is a very aurally-oriented society – witness the booming sales of audio equipment: stereos, tape decks, CB intercoms, conference phones . . . There have evolved cultural differences between the deaf and the non-deaf that one would not expect.

In a hearing society, if Jennifer were to say to Phil, "I'll be there on Tuesday," Phill would assume that she would show up. If in fact Jennifer did not arrive on Tuesday but called Phil to explain that her car had broken down, Phil might be disappointed but understanding. But if the same scenario happened in deaf society, Phil would not be as understanding. He would tend to feel betrayed. "You said you would come and then you didn't. You lied to me!"

This refusal to admit extenuating circumstances as an excuse seems harsh to us, but the converse of it is a very beautiful thing. The trust between deaf people is far greater than anything hearing people experience. They can truly rely on each other in any situation, and their loyalty is to be admired. In a way, deaf people are somewhat akin to North American Indians in their interpersonal relations and close bonding. These insights into the deaf personality were provided by Reverend Bob Rumball, director of the newly completed Ontario Community Centre for the Deaf in Toronto.

Cultural differences can be so subtle, and go often undetected. Consider for a moment the gentlemen from a Scandinavian country who lay in a hospital bed, very thirsty after surgery. "Would you like a drink?" asked a nurse. "No thank you," he replied. Shortly after, a nurse's aid offered him some orange juice. Again he refused, and the poor man was left

parched and dry. In his country, it is not polite to accept food or drink until it has been offered three times.

Mutual understanding in interpersonal relations relies totally on effective communication. Too often people equate communication with only the speaking of verbal language. Speaking the same language is not necessarily requisite to making oneself understood by a foreigner, as can be attested to by anyone who has travelled abroad. Much of what we say is communicated by paralanguage, that is, the form of language consisting of all the verbal embellishments of bare words: tone and timbre of voice, rhythm and speed of speech, inflection, use of pause and filler nonsense syllables. It is the paralanguage of the typical British speaker which sometimes suggests an air of superiority and coldness to the unaccustomed ear. The tone of voice employed by white teachers is louder than that which North American Indian children are used to hearing. This causes the children to believe that the teachers are angry with them when first they go to school.

Body language is manifested through touch, spacing, eye contact, mode of walking, facial movements, gestures of the extremeties such as foot tapping, posture and stance, even the speed of movement. Little gestures give clues to emotional tenor.

Proxemics is one form of body language. Personal territory is something which one thinks about when walking the dog, but not usually in relation to humans. There is great difference in the size of the invisible personal space bubbles which we all wear. In large cities in England, it is crowded everywhere, and people are used to being in close proximity with others. At a McDonald's, one would invariably have to share a table with strangers. However, the Briton who walks into a Canadian McDonald's and seats himself at the opposite corner of another's table while there is still a table vacant is viewed askance. He most likely never would have expected to enjoy the luxury of his own private table, and just unconsciously headed for the closest seat available.

Interpersonal spacing during a conversation varies noticeably from nationality to nationality. Latin Americans characteristically stand quite close to the consternation of Canadians, who feel that it constitutes sexual aggression. If a Canadian unconsciously backs away, a Latin American regards him as being cold and unfriendly. How many immigrants of Latin or other descent have decided that Canadians are unfriendly on the basis of differences in this small mode of communicating alone?

The Japanese, on the other hand, are most comfortable maintaining considerable distance from others in conversation. But their habit of profuse smiling – only basic etiquette in Japan, but often interpreted as extreme friendliness here – compensates for the excessive distance, and forstalls any impression of formality.

Proximity to others is a component of communication which often goes unnoticed. People will unconsciously shuffle back into corners in efforts to maintain their personal territories, all the while feeling disturbed by a nameless discomfort.

It has been said that "the eyes are the window of the soul." So much is signalled by pupil dilation, muscle tone, blinking and direction of gaze. There is something about Arab males that causes western women to feel very apprehensive in their presence. "They seem to look right through your clothes." "They have bedroom eyes." "I don't feel safe around them." The explanation lies in eyelid movement. Research shows that the typical number of blinks per minute is much lower for Arabs than for North Americans. In fact, their blinking rate is nine times less than that to which we are accustomed. Unfortunately, this culturally deviant behaviour of the Arabs is interpreted in our society to be indicative of lecherous thoughts.

Eye contact is more consciously read as a clue to things such as a person's level of

interest, shyness, hurriedness, or affection. In Spanish and Portuguese society, to stare at the floor is an attitude of respect. In Canada, however, it is respectful to look another person in the eye. This discrepancy in gaze direction has caused problems for children of Spanish and Portuguese descent in Canadian classrooms. While being reprimanded, one of these students would stare at the floor, and the teacher would become still further incensed that the child would not meet his gaze.

This paper would not be complete without a brief discussion of the implications of the most obvious of differences between ethnic minorities: that of language. Israel Horovitz' play, *The Primary English Class*, brings home dramatically the fact that we naturally assume baby talk to come from a baby. It is a clever comedy about the first night of an English immersion class. The five immigrants speak no English, their words are translated by an off-stage Translator. The audience is taken by surprise to hear such witty and caustic comments from people who could not even understand "sit down." The behaviour of the naive teacher was a classic example of the attitude some people take. It is a commonly held misconception that increased volume can compensate for lack of comprehension.

The fact that verbal articulation is so closely associated with intelligence is perhaps the greatest strike against anyone whose mother tongue is not English. Psychologists have long debated the question of whether thought can exist without language. Piaget's view is that language merely translates what is already understood, and that the sophistication of verbal output increases with the level of understanding. This does not mean that the level of understanding is confined to the level of expression. But the reaction of most people when they hear poor grammar and mispronunciation is to assume that the speaker is not very intelligent. It is a natural reaction; there is the constant example of children's speech to reinforce it.

People whose mother tongue is not English are generally accredited with having less intelligence than they actually possess. But it would seem that immigrant populations are the *creme de la creme*. The ones who come to seek fortunes in a new land are those who have the money, the initiative, and the perception to realize that Canada offers a lot of opportunities. According to Walter Pitman, who headed the Task Force on Human Relations, half of the Sikhs who have come to Toronto have had post-secondary education and the average immigrant is fluent in three languages. If a new language is studied after the age of about sixteen, when aural discrimination ceases developing, it is very difficult to duplicate foreign sounds exactly, and some degree of accent is pretty well inevitable.

It almost goes without saying that problems in communication are a perpetual risk. Even between persons who speak the same tongue but are from different cultures, misunderstandings can arise due to idiomatic idiosyncrasies. There is probably not one person from England who has not at some point cheerfully promised a new Canadian friend, "I'll come and knock you up tomorrow morning!"

Speaking, standing, walking, looking, eating, working, playing – in all behaviours people conform to the patterns set by their cultural heritage. There are myriad differences in the way ethnic groups respond to life, both in action and attitude. How well disparate groups can live cooperatively in the same community depends on their tolerance. Only understanding, patience and tolerance can ameliorate the complications which arise from cultural difference.

To Overlea - and other schools like it

Maria Wagner Price

No one can dispute the fact that Canada is a multi-ethnic country where Canadians of British origin no longer form the absolute majority. In the past, attempts were made to Canadianize all immigrant people; this view was especially prevalent in the schools. At present, however, such an attitude is changing and people are becoming more aware of the value of preserving a multi-ethnic society and of the fact that the integration of the ethno-cultural groups into the Canadian society could only enhance and not hinder it. Thus a major need is to educate the Canadian people in multiculturalism

Multicultural education is, of course, a very difficult thing to implement. Probably the easiest place to start is in the schools. How? The first thing is to change the attitude of teachers toward the immigrant child. Such a child is not a problem which must be dealt with in the classroom but rather someone who has many new and interesting things to contribute to the class. With this in mind, the teacher can help all students strive for the respect and understanding of all peoples.

There are several experiences I have had of a multicultural nature, and I should like to relate some of these.

I have an ethnic background. My mother is Yugoslavian and my father is Polish. They met in England after World War II, where I was born. I was therefore reared in a very European environment and was exposed to little else until I began attending school in Canada.

The types of multicultural experiences seem small and insignificant now, but at the time they were major events in my life. For example, I would often get strange looks if someone asked me for my middle name and I would always have to repeat it – Jadwiga. Eventually I became very reluctant to reveal this name. Also, if someone asked me what I had for dinner the previous night and I listed borsch, pyrohy, and nalashniki, I would be asked to describe these strange foods.

Young children are always trying to outdo one another. They are always comparing for example, "My dad is better than your dad." When I was asked what my father did for a living, I would answer that he was a wireman in a factory but always add that he had studied Mathematics and Physics in Poland before the war and had become a qualified highschool teacher. After the war he had first gone to England and then come to Canada. They didn't accept his qualifications here so, while working to support a family, he tried to get his Canadian teaching certificate. He had to stop going to school because he got an ulcer.

I guess I always added the qualifying statements for two reasons. Number one was that I wanted the kids to know my father wasn't a 'dummy' just because he worked in a factory. Secondly, I wanted them to know that my father could have had a 'good' job if he had been Canadian, but being an immigrant he just hadn't had the opportunity.

When I was in public school, the main objective of the teacher was to Canadianize the immigrant child. One incident that sticks out in my mind was the first day of school in grade one. We had to fill out name and address cards and hand them to the teacher. The girl sitting next to me was Estonian and her name was Tiiu. When she handed her card to the teacher, the teacher read Tiiu's name back to her, mispronounced. The teacher decided to give Tiiu an easier name, Susan. From then to the end of high school, Tiiu was known as Susan.

This Canadianizing attitude somehow had extended to my parents. I often wondered why my father had never taught me Polish. I had learned German through my Grandmother – she lived with us since my birth and had played a major role in my upbringing because my mother worked. When I asked my father why he hadn't taught me Polish at the same time, he replied that I was in Canada and should therefore speak English.

Because of differences in the European and Canadian value systems, conflicts arose between my home and my social life. At the age of 19 I began dating a young Canadian man. I remember once we were discussing how we had gotten together, and he asked me why I had never asked him out on a date and why I had waited for him to ask me. Well, I felt that was just impossible! I could never have done that. That would have been 'chasing' the boy. My parents always told me that the boy makes all the moves. Being a girl all you can do is wait. In fact, three years after I had been going out with this same fellow and we were talking about marriage, I still remember my mother saying, on several occasions after I had phoned him, "You know, his mother will think you're chasing him."

What can the Canadians and the immigrants do to educate each other to their respective customs and values? How can the people be made aware? As I have said, it appears that the trend today is not towards total Canadianization of immigrant people but rather an attempt to answer these questions.

While I was out practice teaching, I was fortunate enough to see what I would term a multicultural school in action. The school was Overlea Secondary School and the student body consisted of 46 different ethnic groups. No ethnic group was represented by a majority of students, although I noticed a relatively large number of East Indian, Chinese and Black

students. I felt no prejudice within the school among teachers and students or among the students themselves. I noticed, however, that certain groups did tend to stick together. For example, when walking through the cafeteria I always noticed a large number of Black students congregating there. I'm sure this happened in some others, if not all of the ethnic groups, but this group was the most obvious.

How did the school handle the multi-ethnic situation? First of all, the students kept their own names and therefore their own identities. Also, in the classroom situation a student couldn't feel he or she was part of a minority group because in a class of 35 perhaps 30 different ethnic groups were represented.

One event that was of major importance in the school and one which everyone looked forward to was the Multicultural Night. This night gave the students, parents and teachers the opportunity to be introduced to and to experience the cultures of the different ethnic groups in the school.

The Multicultural Night consisted of a night in which the students and their families were invited to the school. A group of students, with the aid of some teachers, planned the night. All students were encouraged to wear their national dress. There was folk dancing from the different countries. Booths were set up to display the many different arts and crafts and also to sell food. Some students were involved in a 'March of Nations', which was a fashion show of all the different ethnic costumes. There were also many displays set up around the school depicting life in the other countries. This was a very exciting experience for all who attended.

To reiterate, the trend of the schools, when I was in public school, was to Canadianize the immigrant. I don't think that is bad, to a certain extent. It is important for an individual to learn about the country he is living in. To be able to live fully within a country one must understand the customs and culture of the country. The problem is created when this is done to extremes so that the immigrant is virtually forced to give up his own ethnic background. What a horrible shame! Personally, I can't understand how the Canadian people could have done that. What were they afraid of?

When I reflect over the experiences I had as a child, I wonder if I would have been any different if I had gone through a school system which stressed multiculturalism. Maybe I wouldn't have been embarrassed about a strange sounding name or I would have learned more about my friends and their "strange" customs.

How wonderful it is to be exposed to such a wide variety of people. Maybe Overlea works because it is Overlea and for that reason alone. Had it been another school with other teachers and students perhaps activities such as the Multicultural Night would not have created the interest and enthusiasms that it had. I should have liked to attend a school like Overlea. They have got the right idea: that to be truly educated students must share in the knowledge and experiences of their fellow students.

On Being an Immigrant Student - In Canada and Abroad

Lesley Ann Pearson

To be relevant, education in Canada must be multicultural. To maintain and perpetuate itself, a society or a nation must set forth education as one of its essential institutions and systems to reflect and minister to the diverse needs of its people. Canada as a nation and as a society consists of many different groups of people with many contributory cultural patterns and products of behaviour, all characterized by individual and group diversities within systems of relationships. The highly diversified and complex character of this nation-society sets forth its culturally pluralistic nature.

Canadian society is a unique mosaic of cultures, linked and interrelated through a pervading way of life contributed to and shared by all Canadians. It is a way of life that recognizes and accommodates its contributory cultures. These cultural variants may be in many forms, such as language, customs, traditions, beliefs, religions, art, technology, national origin, political persuasion, racial identity, ethnic heritage, and other characteristics or attributes which define and constitute group aggregates. It is therefore apparent, if education in Canada is to meet the needs of its people, that it must have some content related to the different cultural forms.

The schools have been significantly involved during recent years in efforts to improve disparity in educational opportunity by means of a variety of special programs such as those dealing with compensatory education for the culturally "disadvantaged", special education classes and adult education programs. And even though these programs form part of the central curriculum, the different cultural groups in Canada are having difficulty in school; thus we need to look beyond the various programs that are designed to educate the immigrant and learn first what is causing their problems.

We recognize that children of so-called ethnic background face problems in school even without any overt acts of racism being directed against them. These problems are of two types: (a) those that arise from the background of the cultural group being entirely different from the type of environment which confronts him; and (b) those which stem from the images of him and his country of origin that are conjured up in the minds of the teachers and the other children. The former may be called "internal" because they arise from forces internal to his subculture; the latter "external" because they emerge from factors or forces external to his subculture.

One of the major internal problems is culture shock. Many people do not realize the shock an immigrant child experiences when he or she first enters a Canadian classroom particularly if he/she comes from countries such as India or Taiwan. The faces are new; the books are new; supplies are enormous – indeed overwhelming, whether they are the number of books or the sophisticated technology; the students behave differently; the blackboard is sometimes green – the list can be continued. He feels extremely self-conscious, his confidence can be shattered and he tends to seek security in withdrawing and keeping himself aloof from all the activities of the school except mastering his school work.

Examples of external problems can be listed too: the teacher who thinks that because the student is Chinese he must be good at Mathematics and Science, and well behaved; the children who think that because he is East Indian his accent is funny and he cannot speak English as well as they – hence he is not very bright. They feel that the student has come from a poverty stricken country, a country that has what a leading British politician, Dorothy Woodman, called the "Oxfam image of a subculture", and so he is socially and culturally backward.

Given time and corrective measures, most children can overcome these problems. Sympathy, assistance and encouragement from teachers and friendliness and cooperation from fellow students could work wonders in this regard. Once the initial shock has been overcome and the resulting inhibitions dealt with, the children involved should be able, for the most part, to move smoothly into normal school life. However, if sympathy, assistance and encouragement from the teachers and friendliness from the students are missing, the immigrant student may find it extremely difficult to adjust and may, as a result, suffer grave and permanent psychological damage.

Because there is a specific cultural bias to a school system, the individual school transmits a specific and dominant cultural message to the young student; it transmits a heritage that is alien to him; it says to him that the cultural base which previously provided his personality with its identity is no longer valid. Thus the student finds himself caught between two worlds each of which struggle for his cultural allegiance.

The situation poses some problems for the Canadian born students, teachers and the public also, because the exclusion of the knowledge of the immigrant cultural groups from materials studied in Canadian schools creates a wide gap in the knowledge that Canadian students, teachers and the public at large have of the world in which they live. This is a serious flaw in the Canadian educational system, not merely from the point of view of race

relations but in terms of educational principles. It is inconceivable that an educational system should ignore what effectively amounts to half of the world.

There is the added pressures generated by racism in the school environment. Racism in schools is demonstrated, among other ways, through racial slurs and physical violence against immigrant students and through negative attitudes of both teachers and students. Teachers are often responsible for discrimination against students who are members of minority groups. They often unknowingly single out minority students in their classes and expect them to work harder and write better papers than white students in order to get decent grades; they often have lower expectations of immigrant students.

The internal and the external pressures discussed earlier and the racial problems which immigrant students have to face have cumulative, grave and adverse effects on the mental capacity and emotional strength of immigrant children. Although most immigrant students can do well in their studies, there have been cases where their academic performance has been affected by these pressures, pressures that have a demoralizing effect on their attitudes. Once defeatist attitudes set in at this very early period in their lives, their future careers and growth may be impaired forever.

I have chosen to write on ethnic or cultural groups in education because I have experienced circumstances similar to those these groups might encounter here in Canada in their educational situation. For two years I lived in the African country of Kenya, where my father had gone on an international aid assignment. At the age of 16, I was placed in a new and challenging environment. I was put in a boarding school about 100 miles from where my parents lived. The environment was new and different from anything I had ever seen. The school was run according to the British system of education, which of course is different from the Canadian system I had just come from. Naturally it took a while for an adjustment to this new system of schooling, the different subjects, and teaching methods. Most of the teachers in the school were African or Asian. Immediately the problem of a language difference was evident. There were several nationalities at the school all of whom spoke a different language. For me it was hard because I spoke only English to begin with; and when the other students would speak another language, I would feel left out. It was a depressing situation at first, but as I began to learn the other languages it was easier.

I found it very difficult at times to understand the teachers. The language of instruction was English, but with the various accents of the teachers it was hard for me to get everything they said. Because of this my marks in the first year were not very good; when I would study I found my notes were incomplete or had the incorrect things written down, just because I did not quite understand what was going on. This is the same thing that the immigrant children in Canada are going through today. As teachers we must recognize this and try to help these children understand better.

Cultural background plays an important part in the adjustment made in a new environment. For me in Kenya, it was difficult to adjust to the ways of the people I was living with. I had come from a very open system of education, as well as a rather free family life, in which I was allowed to make my own decisions. I was then placed in a totally new situation where I was told exactly what to do, when to do it, and quite often how to do it. This was very difficult for me to adjust to. My upbringing was such that I was encouraged to participate in any activities or projects I felt I could handle. At the boarding school, we were very restricted in the activities we were allowed to take part in. I found this very inhibiting and often depressing. Of course to the other students this was routine practice and they were used to this type of upbringing.

The different way of life of the students in the school was difficult for me to compre-

hend. Their life style was such that they never questioned anything done at the school, such as the rules. For me this was hard to take. I had been brought up to question things that I didn't understand, or felt were unfair, this attitude got me into quite a bit of trouble. For me, the whole situation of being taken out of a modern Canadian high school and put into an "old fashioned" British boarding school with totally different customs, languages, values, etc. exerted a very disturbing influence on my development. I found it very hard to adjust; and when we did come back from Africa, I was literally behind two years from all my friends.

I was a small minority in the school. Out of 900 students, there were 30 white people in the school. Naturally there were signs of discrimination by the students. At first I was called names, picked on in class, was the victim of racial slurs, and so on. For any student this can be very disturbing. I found myself very depressed the whole time because I did not know how to handle this abuse. I had never been in contact with this type of thing before. This treatment came from both the students and the teachers.

As a future teacher, I think this experience has helped me to understand what the immigrant children in Canada are experiencing. I hope that as a teacher I can be sympathetic to what the ethnic groups are experiencing here in Canada, because I have been put in their situation myself.

I should like to see many recommendations put into effect so that there aren't the continuous problems in the education of ethnic groups in Canada. As a future teacher I would recommend the following:

- Schools should deal with promoting greater understanding about racial differences.
- Schools should help the immigrant children to overcome social problems by encouraging teachers to help them individually.
- Teachers should learn not to "centre" an immigrant child out in front of the class.
- Teachers should try not to pass judgement on a child from an ethnic group about his capabilities as a student, that is, assuming that because a child is not white he is not very intelligent.
- Schools should introduce programs which would recognize and reflect the immigrant student's cultural and racial integrity to ensure his success in school.
- English as a Second Language programs should be more readily available to immigrant children. These programs should teach the child sufficient oral and written English so that he can take his place in the regular school program as soon as possible, and to provide him with the help and understanding necessary so that he can quickly enter the culture of the school and world outside.
- A component of Canadian studies should be a study of the local school community; it should include material on the history and settlement patterns of the various cultural groups in that community. If one accepts the premise that Canadian culture should be multicultural, then the role of the school should be the development of that culture.

As teachers, we must understand what the immigrant child is experiencing and do our best to help the child adjust to his new environment, so that he feels a part of his new culture, and so that he understands what's happening around him in this new place.

A Liberalized Child, I was Stymied

Bill Newhook

"Be careful how you deal with this topic. We've had a couple of racial incidents here at the school and we don't want to provoke any more." Those two sentences approximate what an associate teacher told me while I was preparing my Man in Society unit on crime during my practice teaching sessions. In essence, that was my rude introduction to the type of problems one could encounter while teaching in a multicultural secondary school. My first reaction, being a "liberalized" child of the sixties, was disbelief; my second reaction, a more rational approach, was how could I present such a new apparently explosive topic, ripe with such classic stereotypes as Italian gangsters like Al Capone, and the Irish cop walking his beat in New York City, without insulting someone, or provoking an outburst of cultural nationalism or even starting a new reason for a new "incident"? I was stymied. I had to deal with a topic that indirectly could affect the majority of the class which was not of Anglo-Saxon background. Here began my interest in the role of the teacher in the multicultural classroom. Here began the germs of observations, complaints, questions and suggestions regarding the role the teacher MUST be prepared to play in our growing multicultural schools and communities.

My first questions are all ego-oriented because I lack the broad social interactions that a city dweller might encounter. I was raised and educated in a rising middle management class area of an almost totally White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Toronto suburb. I had no contact with any ethnic group beyond second generation Italians, who raised their children in approximately the same way my parents raised me. My first contact with non-whites did not come until my second year of University. Frankly, I was thrilled to have friends of a different race and cultural background from my own. I wanted to "practice my liberalism". Little did I know I was showing my own naivete and insecurity. But I had studied Cultural Anthropology, and that discipline, I felt, gave me an "edge" in relating to people from various cultural backgrounds – after all, I had studied Margaret Mead and Claude Levi-Strauss. But back to the present reality and the questions at hand. How would someone like myself be prepared to teach in a multicultural school made up of cultural groups that differed by race, religion, language, ethnicity . . .? How could it be possible to teach a class with so many different students and reach a common ground, even if they all were fluent in English? Further, I had to question what my qualifications were and what they should have been.

The Faculty of Education of the University of Toronto does not directly prepare its students to enter a multicultural classroom. Even the course *Cross Cultural Education* does not attempt to indicate how to teach various ethnic, cultural and racial groups; instead it stimulates discussion concerning problems that may be common to all racial and ethnic groups, including the major sub-areas such as age, sex, and socio-economic background. The question that immediately comes to mind is, "Does this course in any way prepare the teacher to teach a multicultural class?" The answer is No. The course does stress that multiculturalism cannot be taught per se. However, a sensitization to possible problems can be taught. Perhaps, in light of the fact that the Bachelor of Education programme is only one year in length, only a sensitization to the topic of multiculturalism can be broached.

Obviously, the discussion surrounding the role of teacher training in a multicultural society is varied. Dean R. Overing of York University's Faculty of Education believes that much is being done **indirectly** rather than directly to prepare students to teach in a multi-ethnic society. Similarly, at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Education, attempts are made to sensitize prospective teachers to problems inherent in the interaction among students of various racial and cultural backgrounds.

Because of its longer period of teacher education, York students are deliberately sent to spend at least a year in inner city schools. This encounter gives the students a first hand experience with the complexities of dealing with multicultural, multi-ethnic education. An experience of this nature can be likened to on-the-job training. Through this system, the student grows as a teacher and is not thrust into a multicultural school as a beginning teacher without having first had some experience in such schools. The advantages of such a system are many: The student is associated with a school, its students, and its problems for an extended period of time. The student 'gets a feel' for the type of school with which he/she becomes associated. And, perhaps most important of all, the student can grow as a teacher under the continually guiding hand of his/her associate.

An American educator, E. A. Holmes, suggests that teachers teaching multiculturalism should be licensed[1] and that their program should be competency-based.

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education offers courses and certificates in Multiculturalism, as well, university specialist courses are receiving consideration. These courses would be in the realm of professional development for the already practising teacher, and as such not available to the teacher in training. These observations lead to further questions concerning teacher training and retraining.

Should teachers already teaching be encouraged to take retraining or upgrading in the area of multiculturalism? Would teachers who did not take retraining courses be subject to discipline ranging from dismissal to being overlooked for promotion? These questions are important if multicultural education is to be a reality. Ideally, the major themes of multicultural education should be woven into the curriculum, regardless of the nature of the course, from Art to Zoology. More questions start to come to mind when one stops to think about how the teacher has been trained to incorporate a multicultural approach to his/her subjects.

Immediately the curriculum comes to mind. Does the present curriculum from Early Childhood Education to Grade Thirteen have to be revamped to fit the multicultural mode? For example, Where do the changes begin? Do changes start in the classroom, or at the Board level? Will changes be implemented at the Ministerial level or even by a "National Educational Policy"? Again, the problems are astronomical in scope. More questions come to mind, especially when the complexities of revamping an entire curriculum are being discussed: How well do the textbooks that are currently being used in the schools reflect a multicultural society? How ethnocentric are textbooks concerning the 'true' Canadian experience? Do the textbooks perpetuate cultural and ethnic stereotypes? What social, political, cultural and ethnic groups have been overlooked or portrayed in a derogatory manner? In effect, I am asking if we are teaching prejudice without really being aware of its implications. The teacher's unawareness of possible problems of a cultural or ethnic nature could be due to his/her lack of prior training.

In many cases the teacher is unaware of what ethnic, cultural or even racial groups are present in his/her own classes. For example, a student's name can be deceiving. Often, to be more readily accepted in a new society, the immigrant may choose to change his/her last and/or given names. Ethnic names are believed by some immigrants to be social handicaps. I have friends whose last name is Johnstone. Only recently did I discover that the Johnstones's parents came to Canada from Poland after World War II. Upon arrival they changed their last name Wyrzykowski to Johnstone, believing that an Anglo-Saxon name would be beneficial for business success in Canada. Perhaps the simplest method a teacher can use to discover more about his/her students is through personal interviews with the students. To be effective the teacher should try to meet with all of his/her students as early in the school year as possible. Teachers should also rely on the school's Guidance Department for more detailed information about particular students. As well, the beginning or new teacher should invariably be "briefed" about specific children and their backgrounds, especially in inner-city schools which often have the most culturally diverse student populations. Again, the onus of proper preparation is on the teacher training programmes offered. Are new teachers being properly trained to teach in multicultural neighborhoods?

Neighborhoods change with time: People come and go and often a neighborhood takes on an ethnic or racial identity. A school in area "A" in 1963 may have been predominantly Jewish in population. The same school may be populated predomiantly by West Indians or Chinese in 1979. The questions that must be asked about predominantly ethnic neighborhoods concern who is best qualified to teach in an ethnic neighborhood. Should a neighborhood that is 85% Polish have a majority of teachers that are of Polish extraction? What happens to the teachers that are already there? Should they be transferred to other schools? Would it be good public relations to have a principal or vice-principal of Polish extraction? Should the school strive to present its Polish identity within the neighborhood? The list of questions can continue, but there is an irony inherent in the possible solution: What is to be done about the minority groups within the neighborhood – the Jews, the Chinese, and the Irish?

The effectiveness of multicultural programmes depends to a great extent on how well the teacher has been trained to teach in the multicultural school. Teachers who specialize in multicultural education or multiculturally-related courses are in a minority. In general, teachers are genuinely ignorant of their role in a multicultural world and this ignorance might lie partially in their poor preparation. Multiculturalism is not to be seen as a fad or even a popular interest for those who are prone to joining the latest socially acceptable band-wagon. Teacher training schools and school boards must begin to put into practice the ideas that their professorial theoreticians express ever so eruditely in their scholarly journals. The task at hand is by no means simple. Multicultural classrooms are no longer limited to the inner-city schools.

My brief sojourns into the "real" world via Practice Teaching sessions have shown me that the acceptable verbiage to deal with a multicultural reality is present in the local high school staff-room. The problem is, however, that the mechanisms that turn words into actions have yet to filter down, on any large scale, to the classroom level. Sensitive caring teachers have always been present, but now more than ever we need more of them.

---

1 Holmes, E. A., "A Competency-based Multicultural Education Licence." *Educational Horizons*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 1977-1978, pp. 84-89.

Students-in-Transition - a self-help project

Cecil Cummins

INTRODUCTION

The reason for this essay is to take a philosophical look at some of the problems facing West Indian students and their parents in relating to the metropolitan Toronto public school system. I will look at the transitional period of the students and the kinds of relationship that exist among parents, students and teachers; some of the adjustment problems that have to be faced by teachers, parents and students. I will recommend what seem to be possible solutions to some of the problems and finally conclude with my personal opinion as to why I am suggesting those possible solutions.

Of the 40,000 plus blacks in Toronto, one could safely assume that almost eighty percent are from the West Indies; and of that eighty percent, a conservative estimate would put half within the school age, meaning under twenty years old. It is very awkward for one to be exact, especially when the official figures are not nearly correct and there is very little chance of correcting them, since the Toronto population is very transient from borough to borough. There could be a far greater chance of getting an accurate figure as to how many

West Indian students are in the Toronto public school system, but officials at East York Board of Education, for example, consider such an attempt to be almost like creating a quota system – as I discovered when I approached them. "Since we really do not know how many Italians or Portuguese people there are, why should we want to know how many West Indians there are?", they argued. In reality, my answer was "There are white West Indians, and Chinese and Indians and even some coloured ones"; but the officials maintained that they were mainly concerned with doing the best they could for all the students within that borough. The other five boards came up with the same basic answers and were discussing programmes that may try to solve other educational problems within their respective boroughs.

Metro School Programmes

In all the metropolitan boroughs, nearly every school Board had, or was working toward, some kind of programme that they hope would meet the needs of the ethnic/immigratant students. Some of the most popular programmes were the English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Second Dialect (ESD) programmes. Many of the teachers I spoke to who were responsible for maintaining these programmes thought they were not getting the necessary cooperation from the majority of the parents. They wanted to see greater participation mainly from the West Indian parents, but many did not know how to reach the parents. The students were eager, because their grades depended on how well they are able to communicate not only with their peers but with the teachers also. An interview with some of the parents did indicate that they were not fully aware of such programmes, but now they would try to get more information. Some schools in the borough of York and East York were also having Adult programmes for those who could not make it during the day, meaning they were welcomed during the evening.

I thought some advantage would have come out of greater parent participation, especially those who were new arrivals accompanied by their children; since the children were in such a programme, parent and student would learn from each other. In some cases, I received the regular West Indian "shrug" and "man I too old fuh school house"; however, they insisted that their children attend school regardless of what was being taught.

Parent Student Relationship

It would appear as though most West Indian parents have a passion for obedience. They demand it regardless of the size of the child. They also thrive on authoritarianism in the strictest sense, still I often wonder how some students happen to get out of control at school and outside the home. The polite answer I received from some students was "My mum and dad can't be everywhere I turn. They got to work sometime."

In some cases the parents thought the children were ruined because of too much TV. And for those who were left behind in the West Indies to be taken care of by an Aunt or some other relative, the parents thought that that relative was much to be blamed for allowing the child to get out of hand. The students on the other hand thought the parents were not "with it", and every little chance they got, they had to make full use of. I did not find the so called "breakdown in communication" between parent and child, because each knew of his/her position. What was very evident was the need of many of the students to get out of school as soon as possible. Many did not hate school; they just thought there should be an alternative.

When asked how they got along with their teachers, the regular answer was, "They don't bother me, so I don't bother them." The same was asked of the parents and in most cases the answer was: "This is not like back home. I don't know the teacher. Teachers back

home will go to the church on Sunday. Most of the time we know all the teachers and they know all the children. But here you don't know who is teacher from who is student."

An extended conversation with a family did bring out some rather important points; namely: some of the older West Indians in Canada who went to school in the West Indies felt that they had a better basic education there. The younger generation here seems to know more about many other things, but the basics are not as strong; however, they were willing to concede the fact that Canada is a fast-change society that does not care too much. Said one parent, "People don't cry in this country."

Students-In-Transition (S.I.T.)

There are certain social factors within this present Canadian society that prevent certain ethnic groups, blacks in particular, from progressing. Just to name two of the many factors may seem very inadequate; however, these two factors, employment and education, in the present Canadian social system, are the flesh and blood of human existence. They are like politics and economics in an inseparable sense, that is, so-called respectful and law abiding citizens of adult age are supposed to be working people; and children under the age of eighteen are supposed to be in school. It is as plain and simple as that.

Ah, that sounds good, but the variables have not been looked at. Students-In-Transition happened to be one of those social action projects created because of the indelible fusion of work and education. SIT was the outcome of the dissatisfaction of parents, guardians and concerned black adults who really did not know to whom they should turn for the necessary information about their children's education. Those West Indians who were totally unfamiliar with the Ontario school system decided there must be a way other than a wish, a hope, and a prayer. So the organization was formed mainly to pass on official information on education. It was located in a house at the corner of Bathurst Street and St. Clair Avenue, and easily accessible to the residents in the area and those areas adjoining.

Those working parents felt they now had a vehicle through which they could channel their complaints, because, as it turned out, SIT was in very close contact with the neighboring public and high schools: Osler, Regal Road and West Park.* The staff of SIT would always visit other schools and attend school board meetings, but the main purpose of the organization was to pass on official information to the parents.

School Programmes

With a grant from the Federal Government and a staff of eight, we made those three schools our base of operation. A programme was set up in each school to operate throughout the day and, in one particular case, long after that school was officially closed. Let me deal primarily with West Park Secondary school which was one of the bases from which the programme operated.

West Park is said to have special problems; one of the main reasons is because of the composition of its population. To me it is like a mini-United Nations. For a start, the "No smoking" sight at the entrance is written in about eight different languages, also in French, of course! I would think it is fair to say the largest ethnic population there is the West Indian. The school attendance should be about 1,000, but I was assured it does not exceed 800 at the best of times. However, I found more than plenty to do at the school from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. – which was my official time of functioning.

---

* These names are not ficticious.

The West Indian students with whom I had to deal, I found very responsive; so much so that SIT was being accused of "polarizing and separating" the students. How ironic! At the school I started with twenty students and in less than two weeks the ranks had swollen to fifty. And for the first time, many parents said they felt easy to work, even when there was pressure on the job. Little did I know the programme was just as satisfying to the parents and children as it was to the caring teachers. My intention was really to help those students who were slightly behind the rest of their peers in any subject.

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I would officially be at the school from 3:00 p.m. until quite late. Mondays were mainly for a "rap session" and homework. At these rap sessions we would discuss what happened over the weekend, what was planned for the rest of the week and how it would be achieved. Wednesdays were for such sports and games native to the Caribbean such as cricket, soccer and dominoes, and for discussing Caribbean history and Canadian social topics. Fridays were for rap sessions, sports and homework. However, those students who had other domestic problems were happy to discuss them whenever it was necessary. Those private discussions I called counselling. What was very noticeable was the progress made by some students after they had discussed some of the domestic problems. I also found another very helpful solution was to have those students with similar problems to sit around and throw them open to the floor. In this way they helped to solve each other's problems. I would allow them to do the same with homework – help each other.

My reward really was to be told by parents that they knew where their children were between 3:00 p.m. and, in some cases, 7:00 p.m. I also found out from parents how much they knew, or how little they knew, of the Ontario school system. For the first time, parents were aware of the many different facilities within a school. Also for the first time, they knew that their children had an Ontario School Record (OSR) card, and that there were even swimming pools, and school nurses and Guidance counsellors. Some of them were even shocked when they learned that some teachers did not understand the vast difference between Guyana, Jamaica and Dominica. This was part of SIT's programme. Another added function of Students-In-Transition was to explain how some Canadian foods were prepared and point out the difference between certain fruits and vegetables. Most of these things the average West Indian adult also takes for granted, not knowing that the Canadian school teachers are at a total loss when a student looks into the clouds and says "Outside looks muddy" instead of saying "it looks grey", as is expected.

Of course with programmes such as these, trouble is always on the horizon; for example, many of the West Indian students liked wearing their colourful hats and caps, but according to the school rules, this was discouraged. So when some of the students, especially the Jamaicans and the Trinidadians, started wearing their hats and discussing what Bob Marley and Lord Kitchener were singing – Kitch and Marley are the idols – they wanted to wear their hats in school. They were told no. Some of the students argued they should be allowed to, because some Jewish kids were wearing their yarmulkas at their respective schools. Of course these West Indian students were not only "disobedient" as far as the authorities were concerned, but they were becoming "rude and ungovernable". If they did not have a reasonable argument, one that could be refuted quite easily, things would have been okay. But they were becoming too aware, and such an argument was an affront to philosophically poor teachers.

Other problems lurking on the horizon for Students-In-Transition were with school counsellors when parents for the first time started attending "Parents-Teachers meetings" and requested answers as to why children were being "passed" when the teachers knew the children were not bright enough. Furthermore, some students were always in trouble with

the teachers only because they asked too many questions, especially politically motivated ones. The greatest shock was when West Indian parents started attending meetings. This was totally unheard of and school officials were not really prepared for this intrusion. Parents frequently did not see agendas and those that saw them noticed that certain important issues were not discussed, even though they were on the agenda. Needless to say, many board officials were complaining for years that parents would not attend meetings; but now parents were showing up, the questions were becoming too political, and officials were always ready to say "this is a school board meeting and not a political meeting." Not political huh!

Well, programmes such as those implemented by SIT and organizations such as SIT are always fraught with suspected social unrest. Everything would have been very harmonious provided the regular academic curriculum subjects were followed, *e.g.*, The War of 1812, the problems between Upper Canada and Lower Canada, the wisdom of Lord Simcoe, and the cunning of Sir John A. MacDonald. But when black students started asking teachers about Marcus Garvey, the West Indian Federation, and Christianity as opposed to Hinduism, then things started to get uncomfortable. Many of the teachers would see these questions as entirely new and not part of the "discussion". SIT and its programmes then would be singled out for causing disruption to the lessons planned. But in truth, many Third World immigrants (children and adults) bring to this so called "multicultural Canadian society" a wealth of information that should be on the schools agenda, rather than being surreptitiously viewed as part of one's heritage.

Beyond Canada

One can safely assume that Ontario does not intend to look beyond White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Canada for innovative education. Multiculturalism is a political, parliamentary term, but I do not think it is endowed with educational substance, or even attempts to be. If education beyond Canada – which is what I think Multiculturalism should be all about – is to be taken seriously, then Ontario, with all its talk of Canadian leadership or Canada's leading province, should start to look at The Education Act, 1974, more seriously. One should remember that The Act states, p. 204. ch. 109 sec. (229):

> "it is the duty of a teacher . . . .
> (c) to include by precept and example respect for religion and the principles of *Judaeo-Christian* morality and the highest regard for truth, justice, loyalty, love of country, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, purity, temperence and all other virtues:

which means, of course, that the strict Moslem student has no place in an Ontario school system, and should he take out his prayer rug to be at peace with Allah for a few minutes, he most obviously would be in the wrong institution as far as the authorities are concerned. If Multiculturalism could be viewed openly and not through Canadian ethnocentrism then Ontario with its "leadership role" would begin to ask probing questions instead of making decisions and then asking for ratification. They would be looking beyond Canada. Third World students would be very helpful in turning on teachers to education on an international level; and, in turn, those Canadian students would be able to teach their parents a thing or two. Simultaneously, the so-called "underdeveloped" and "deprived" students will help to develop himself and Canada. One can be very disdainful of the fact that a certain degree of miseducation will inevitably surface in Third World countries, but to see major technologically developed and sophisticated countries like Canada and teachers languishing away while in an ocean of international wealth is totally unforgivable. Many educators in Ontario just do

not seem to be able to comprehend the magnitude of "cross-cultural education", which also is the hub of multiculturalism within and beyond Canada.

In very recent times I was castigated by a professor for insisting that many Canadian teachers were not fully aware of the many problems imposed "blindly" by them on West Indian students in regards to "Canadian English As A Second Language." My contention then and still is that Canadian teachers in Toronto should learn to listen to students, especially West Indian ones, more so than look at them. They listen with their eyes rather than with their ears; consequently, they hear what they see – and I have a strong suspicion as to what they see – rather than listen to what they hear.

Pre-conditioning has led to certain assumptions that are not necessarily correct. Some researchers such as Arthur Jensen have tried time and again to prove that blacks are genetically inferior to whites; and I suspect that many people are apt to fall for this kind of dogma. As a result, as Professor Wilson A. Head of York University discovered: "many misguided teachers have lower expectations of black students considering them to be slow learners incapable of high achievements." This suggests a certain sense of superiority on the part of the teachers.

But, the question arises: how can one expect a so-called "superior" human being to take seriously a person of low intelligence? I would want to think that if the "superior" person really sees himself as superior, he should be in a position to use the superior parts of his senses: those parts that allow him to be open enough to be a skilled planner; to be able to look at his own beliefs, feelings and behaviours. His feelings should always tell him there is much more to the world than Canada, but within Canada, the area of Cross-Cultural education is intrinsically tied into Multiculturalism, and if practised rather than preached, the country could be a model example. On the contrary, we find the "so-called superior person" rather limited in his outlook especially in the face of highly visible ethnic people.

The irony of the situation is the fact that this present Ontario government has introduced and passed the revised "Education Act, 1974" that preaches "Judaeo-Christian morality." Where then stands the church in relation to education? Is it still the foundation of morality and education? Revision of The Act and of the church should take place simultaneously. The church should become involved in the issues of society to a far greater extent that it presently is. Since most West Indian parents, and black people in general, do have a very long and deep association with – if not conviction in – the church, they should see the church as one of the avenues of communication. I see very little wrong with the church appealing to teachers and other school personnel to come to church, though the church may have to have something more than parables and praise to offer. Needless to say, they do not have to invite West Indian parents, especially the females, because they will "go to church" whether or not they are invited. The Church is their thing.

But since in church you already have the West Indian parents as a mentally and spiritually captive audience, some effort should be made to get school personnel, especially teachers in there. After parents and teachers become a part of the congregation, the priest will have his chance to announce or to create a dialogue among his diverse audience/congregation/flock or whatever. There are reasons behind this creation:

1) Very soon some teachers cannot seem to separate themselves from a classroom-like attitude of talking at people rather than discussing with others. Some of them refuse to omit the intellectual jargon from the discussion and get to the point, and this can very easily turn the layman off – if you ever did get the chance to grab him. Teachers should learn to get to the point because parents will ask straightforward questions and they need straightforward answers.

2) Since most priests tend to be masters of the word – and the word is what they live by any way – they should be there to make sure that the teachers recognize their presence; a degree of truth may come out of the discussions; the priest may even be an interpreter for the teacher who is suffering from scholastic verbal diarrhea, or the parent who is a victim of physical work constipation. The priest should be there to encourage school personnel and the general public to have at least a monthly session exchanging ideas that could come in the form of a questions and answers.

The West Indian parent especially would have a chance to kill many birds with one stone, so to speak. Since most of them cannot take time off from their regular one or two jobs per week, to visit their children's schools(s): to ask questions of the school bureaucracy, to get to know the school principal, to get a tour of the school facilities, to find out what is being taught in the schools, to get a peep at what an Ontario School Record (OSR) looks like, to say hello to the guidance counsellor or school nurse, or to meet the secretary who is constantly answering the telephone every time they want to speak to the principal. Some of them may even get to see inside or outside an Ontario school for the first time – by the way, these West Indian parents do pay taxes! However, some of these and many more are ideas and facilities that many West Indian parents did not know existed, and for obvious reasons.

At these discussions after church, the parents would get a chance to meet and question the people who are responsible for helping not only to educate their children, but also socializing their siblings. They would also know that, unlike in the West Indies, education in Canada cannot be taken for granted, neither should the teacher be kept on a social pedestal where he cannot be reached.

A Unique Role For Canada?

In a study he carried out for the North York Board of Education, John Roth (1977) found that

> (West Indian) parents' attitudes toward school and teacher are likely to be one of complete faith that the educational process will take place in school; that teachers can be depended upon to instill needed facts in their children.

I would like to believe there is a lot of truth in such a statement, but there is also just as much idealism on the parents' part. This may stem from the fact that the parents feel there is very little they can do academically to help. W. W. Anderson and R. W. Grant, in their 1975 study of West Indians in Metropolitan Toronto, found many parents were unaware of how the Ontario school system was organized. Obviously this lack of knowledge could render them fairly helpless with regard to the system and its affairs.

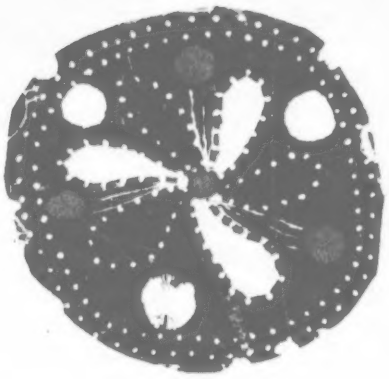
To facilitate a better understanding of both the West Indian child and his culture and the Canadian educational system and the culture that surrounds it, I should like to make two suggestions:

1) If at the present time Canada is experiencing a surplus of teachers because of the so-called "declining enrolment", and since presently C.U.S.O. is very operative; Ontario, if not Canada, should be able to use many of their unemployed teachers in those Caribbean countries that are really in need of qualified teachers.

2) Since the West Indian population in Canada will experience a "natural growth", and

> Canadian teachers will have to teach the West Indian students here in this country, I would think some benefit will be derived from making use of those teachers who have taught in the West Indies and also of the West Indian students in the West Indies and those here in Canada. In other words, the Canadian teacher would or should learn more about the West Indian culture while he is teaching in the West Indies, and when he returns he would bring back with him some valuable experience to be shared with his comrades here and the students in the classroom.

I do think that the American Peace Corps operation in the West Indies helps a great deal, especially since the American social system is not yet fully prepared to accept totally the black person in America. The Canadian social system, at least from the standpoint of residence, is fairly open to ethnic individuals. I use "fairly" very guardedly. Furthermore, unlike New York City, Toronto teachers live in Toronto, whereas most New York City teachers live outside New York City. The point being made here is: most American Peace Corps teachers are white and those operating in the West Indies, on their return to the U.S.A., melt back into their white communities and are again segregated from the black population. In Toronto, C.U.S.O. teachers on their return do not have a lily-white community; but even if they did, those who teach in the inner-city schools still have to teach West Indian students. That being the case, I would see teachers in the larger metropolitan areas in Canada, for example Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and to a lesser degree Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton all benefiting greatly and making Canada a more unique country in this respect than either England or the United States of America.



Most academic books on multiculturalism disappoint by their prolixity and aridity. This one is different. Edited by a scholar, this book combines the wisdom of an elder with the idealism of youth.

For the most part the book is a collection of students' essays. Naturally, as the title suggests, the substance of the essays derives from beginning-teachers' experiences in schools, whether as pupils or as teachers. Although some academics might condemn such material as anecdotal and displaying the misconceptions of a tyro, the freshness, sincerity and the zest of the various writers counterbalance any such accusation. In my estimation it is a good travel book to the new world of multiculturalism.

Alan W. Jones
professor
Graduate School of Education
Bishop's University
Lennoxville, Quebec

Third Eye 84 ISBN 0-919581-05-6